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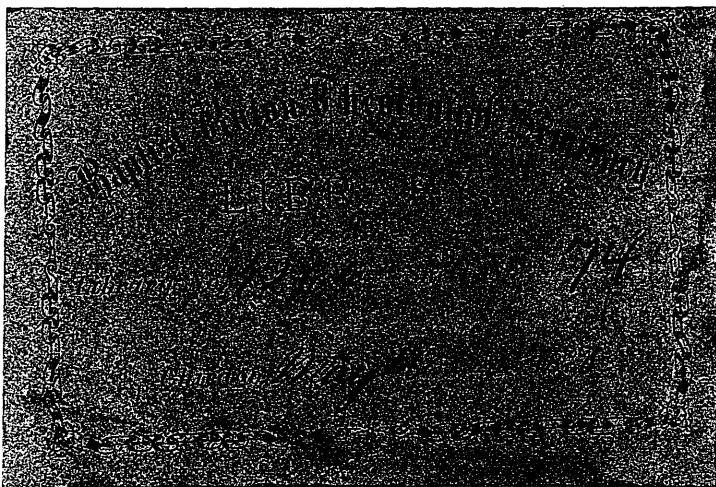
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# LIFE THAT SPEAKETH;

'A Biography of 'Rev., George P. Wilson.

/BY /

DANIEL CLARK KNOWLES.

'  
"He being dead yet speaketh." /



NEW YORK:  
NELSON & PHILLIPS.  
CINCINNATI: HITCHCOCK & WALDEN.  
SUNDAY-SCHOOL DEPARTMENT.

W7K7

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# CONTENTS.

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	PAGE
I. PARENTAGE.....	7
II. THE YOUTH PERIOD.....	18
III. CALIFORNIA LIFE.....	44
IV. THE PREPARATION PERIOD.....	75
V. MISSION WORK IN LAWRENCE.....	96
VI. MISSION WORK IN LAWRENCE, ( <i>Continued</i> )....	125
VII. HOME-LIFE.....	145
VIII. LIFE MAXIMS.....	161
IX. MISSION WORK IN BOSTON.....	169
X. CLOSING SCENES.....	193
XI. PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS.....	218



# A LIFE THAT SPEAKETH.

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## CHAPTER I.

### P A R E N T A G E.

C H R I S T I A N I T Y glories in righteousness rather than in rank. She experiences more of joy in looking upon the luster of a holy life, than in beholding the transient brilliancy of official greatness. This is not true of any other system of religion. Every faith that man has constructed to meet the imperishable yearnings of his religious nature, whether originated from reason or formed out of the perversion of systems given him of God, bears this unmistakable impress of its anti-Christian character, that it subordinates goodness to station, morals to earthly notoriety. Those immortal works of genius, semi-religious in their origin, that have survived the mold and flames of barbaric centuries, have deified monarchs and royal

families, and scornfully neglected the richer legacies of common life. They have given historic prominence to men, because, forsooth, they held a scepter, who ought to have been forgotten the day they died, while the humble plebeian who may have lived a life of heroic sacrifice, found at their hands no biographer. But Christianity has a better record. She teaches us to cherish the good for the sake of goodness, and not because of the accidents of blood or station.

She prompts us to treasure up those deeds of love and heroism that she herself has inspired, no matter in what social grade they may be found ; and in song or prose to send them out to the world as precious currency—the coin of Christ—that they may pass from lip to lip, and heart to heart, enriching every one with a holier inspiration. Hence it has come to pass that the Christian Church will not willingly suffer a noble life to perish from recollection. It matters not on what field its deeds of sacrifice were performed, Christian society strives in some way to keep the memory of its loving labors fresh and lively in the public mind.

These remarks are explanatory, not apolo-

getic. I feel assured that what I may write will need no apology. I propose to tell the public something about a *man*; not a king, nor any official celebrity. My soul is inspired with the conviction as I begin the pleasing task, that these things should be said, to the end that society may see Christianity not as a speculation or a philosophy, but as a life. These pages, I trust, will thus reveal it though the story be told never so imperfectly.

George Pickering Wilson was born in the city of Lowell, Massachusetts, January 29, 1830. Since men are more or less the reflections of ancestral qualities and home influence, no statement of a man's character and work can be complete that does not unfold to us the circumstances of his childhood, and the quality of his parentage.

In the first quarter of this century two persons met in Waltham, Massachusetts, loved and trusted each other, and in accordance with God's own plan joined hands for the journey of life. These persons were James Wilson and Eliza Stetson. James Wilson came to Massachusetts from Hudson, New Hampshire, and was by trade a machinist. He had united with the

Methodist Episcopal Church in early life, and was universally esteemed an honest, industrious, conscientious citizen. He was chiefly distinguished for good common sense, faith in God, religious zeal, devout piety, and strict fidelity to his convictions of duty. In these days he would be called puritanic and over rigid. He was exceedingly plain in dress ; would permit no buttons on the back of his coat, or suffer his children to indulge in personal ornamentation, classing feathers, flowers, bows, etc., as superfluities inconsistent with true godliness. If any of our latter-day Christians are disposed to sneer at such religious convictions, and rejoice over the emancipation of the conscience from such ideas, it may do them good to remember that New England's glory is the product of such heroic natures.

It is possible so to liberalize the conscience as to destroy the essential spirit of Christianity, *self-denial*. Between a Christianity thus emasculated and self-indulgent, and a Christianity strong, positive, self-sacrificing, though tinged with the somber shades of puritanism, there can be no hesitation in making one's choice. It is far better for society to err on the side of



rigidity than that of looseness. We should be very cautious, therefore, in our revolt from the sterner piety of the past, not to plunge ourselves into errors far more destructive to individual and social development. Mr. Wilson may have been rigid, but he was heroic. He gave himself without reserve to the Christian Church. His time and talents were consecrated to God. He met two religious classes weekly, until disease made it impossible. Storms, company, slight indisposition, never detained him from the place of worship. His seat was never vacant. During his last illness he persisted in being dressed in his best apparel on the Sabbath, that he might be outwardly prepared for keeping the day holy. Early in the history of Lowell he removed thither, secured employment in the Lowell machine shop, then just opening its prosperous history, and remained in its employ until his death. He identified himself at once with Methodism in the youthful city. He was one of the organizers of the Worthen-street Church, of which he was an official member as long as he lived. Class and prayer meetings were held weekly at his house, and its atmosphere was continually sanctified

with praise and prayer. He died in holy triumph in the early days of 1849. His last words were a song of triumph—"Halleluia, Amen."

Such was the father of George, a devout, conscientious, godly man, whose name is still precious with the good who knew him.

Eliza Stetson was born in Scituate, Massachusetts. Her father died in her early youth, leaving her mother the sole protection of ten children, the eldest of whom was fourteen years of age. Yet such was her tact and force of character that she brought them all to maturity, with God's blessing, by her own industry and good management. The family adhered to the Unitarian faith. Eliza, however, became interested in Methodism, was powerfully converted by the Holy Ghost, and united her fortunes with the Church of her choice. Her religious associations led her into the society of James Wilson, and they were married. The union was eminently a happy one; they were congenial spirits. She was a devout, conscientious, loving, heroic woman, especially noted for sagacity, sound judgment, and purity of purpose. Her fidelity to Christ, and to all that she esteemed right, could not be shaken

by any adversity, and she made her home fragrant with her womanly modesty, purity, and love. It is not too much to say, that she was a rare character.

God gave them seven children. James, the eldest, was a child of extraordinary promise. He died at the age of eighteen. A brief memoir, written by Rev. Jotham Horton, says, "He was remarkable for an early development of intellect, for ripeness and maturity of judgment. At the age of ten or twelve he seemed to have acquired the discretion of manhood. He was always a praying child, and from the time he was able to articulate words and to conceive thoughts, was accustomed to give utterance to those thoughts in addresses to his Maker, and probably never neglected one season of private devotion."

Some of his writings are published in the memoir, and, for one so young, indicate most extraordinary intellectual endowments. They breathe a spirit of unusual devotion and piety, and show an extensive acquaintance with the best of literature, and a mind familiar with the great questions of philosophy and practical morals. His death-bed was a surpassingly

triumphant and glorious scene. James, though dead, yet speaketh. His life made an impression upon George that never could be forgotten, and aided largely in molding him for his mission. As the reader progresses in these pages he will be struck with the frequent reference that George makes to his sainted brother. John was the second child, a devout and godly boy, who died young. He departed in great peace, holding the hand of George, and speaking volumes of joy through his radiant countenance. Eliza, the eldest daughter, married a Mr. Stevens, removed to Chicago, and died early. George, the subject of this memoir, was the fourth child. Fanny grew to womanhood, and died at twenty. Mary married a Mr. Parker, lived in Chicago, and died early. Gabriella, the youngest, married Matthew Elliot, and lives in St. Albans, Vermont, the sole survivor of the family. All were members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, all manifested a pious spirit, and, with the single exception of the one still living, whose faith in the Lord Jesus Christ locates her treasures also in heaven, all died in the blissful hope of a glorious immortality.

Such was the ancestry, and such the home-

life, of George P. Wilson. It will be profitable for us to pause just here and reflect on these facts. Christianity in its silent progress in society has made us all sensitive to social evils. Probably there never was a period in human history when men and women were more alive to the great moral problems that concern human happiness than the present. The most popular questions of the day are those that look to social regeneration. Reformers are as thick as stars in a midnight sky. Each one has fastened his grip upon some injustice, some social wrong; and with the energy of injured feelings prates upon it to every listening ear, and for every evil he has his specific. These theories are also as thick as the stars. The masses are confused with their very multitude, and the din of voices with which they are thrust before the public. Now, in this clamor and confusion, it will be well for society to keep its eye steadfastly on the polar star that God has set for our guidance in regenerating society, namely, *Home*. Society is but the gathering up of home influences. The nation is the sum total of its home products. With what a dignity does this invest the parental relation! The

father is a true king; the mother a heaven-crowned queen. They are the divinely-appointed police of the State. They are better equipped to produce order and peace than iron-clad navies or emblazoned ranks of soldiery. They are the legislators of the land; the nation's real presidents and governors. Woe to the Republic, when it looks to its battle-fields, its congressional assemblies, its executive chairs, or its police stations, as the sources of social reformation. These are all aids, instrumentalities, and should be used in their appropriate spheres most vigorously and impartially; but the hope of society is in its homes. It is the office of the Church to purify them and make them holy, not to take their place.

If the Sabbath-school should ever be regarded as a substitute, it would become an obstacle to Christianity rather than an aid. Amid the conflict of reformatory theories, the nation is safe if it does not lose sight of its *homes* as its central hope. As long as we cling tenaciously to these, and make them Christian, our Republic will stand. But what shall we say to those who openly seek their ruin, who decry marriage, and anathematize the strictest prin-

ciples of parental responsibility? Are they not enemies of the Republic, social disorganizers, crafty allies of Satan? If we are to judge a home by its moral and spiritual fruitage, can we not pronounce that of the Wilson family a model? We do not claim for it perfection, but it does deserve our admiration. It was truly a Christian home. The parents were unworldly, self-sacrificing; they ruled well their house, and sought by prayer and holy examples to make their children virtuous, wise, and good. In that unpretending sanctuary, where pleasantries were not forbidden; where gladness found a daily song, but where sinful frivolity was excluded; where strict integrity and unselfish devotion to God and man were inculcated every day; where love and kindness ruled all hearts and knit them together as one; where only the best of literature found favor; where prayer and praise were a constant inspiration, was born and reared the hero of our story, the pure, the good, the great-hearted missionary—

“GEORGE P. WILSON.”

## CHAPTER II.

## THE YOUTH PERIOD.

THE experiences of childhood are like dew-drops on the flowers, sparkling but evanescent. They leave a precious influence on the soul, but not much of solid fact for biographies. The childhood of George was very much like that of all little boys—a gay and joyous era, a period of playfulness and innocent roguery. His was a fresh, sparkling nature, in a constant ebullition of fun and frolic. But it was always the roguery of the kitten, the friskiness of the lamb—innocent, harmless, free from the spirit of injustice. Growing on the stock of such a natural and ordinary childhood, were traits that distinguished him as no common character—traits that matured afterward into a royal manhood. When but a mere child, he habitually and devoutly recognized God in acts of devotion. On one occasion he sat at the table awaiting his father's coming. He was



hungry. His father was delayed. Sitting in his little chair, he looked longingly at the good things that had been prepared. He grew impatient under the pressure of his appetite ; and suddenly, having held his hunger as long as his child-nature could endure it, he rose up, clasped his hands, thanked God for daily food, and, having satisfied his conscience in the matter of grace, proceeded deliberately to satisfy his bodily necessities. At another time the children were left alone with the baby sister. George proposed a prayer-meeting, and devoutly and reverently they knelt around the cradle, and poured out childish petitions into the Father's listening ear. "O Lord," said he, "give us good faith, good hearts, and good doctrine." The reader will detect no Pharisaical platitudes in this prayer. When eight or ten years of age he began his missionary work. He chose at that early period to be an apostle to the poor. If he discovered any to be in want, he took their cases on his heart, went round among his friends soliciting money and provisions, and thus aided the needy.

Thanksgiving has a special charm to a New England boy. Fancy then becomes an artist,

and paints most gorgeous pictures, as the shortening days remind him of the coming festival. The unusual bustle in the pantry and kitchen ; the merry and incessant culinary talk ; the pallid pies awaiting the heated oven ; the marvelous preparations going on all over the house ; the expected advent of aunts and uncles and romping cousins ; the general toning up of every thing about the home life, make boys wide awake and frisky with anticipations of games, unctuous gravies, doughnuts, and brown-breasted turkeys. George was especially fond of Thanksgivings. They were jubilees to him, but chiefly because it gave him an opportunity to gladden so many of his poorer neighbors. On one occasion, when the turkey was ready for the family feast, and the luscious dinner was smoking on the table, he came rushing in with a face radiant with a holy purpose. "O mother," said he, "I have found a family without any dinner ! They are poor and hungry, and I want to take our turkey to them. We can do without it, and it will make them so happy !"

The man was but the boy grown up. It was no uncommon thing for the little fellow to rush

into a neighbor's kitchen, when he scented the fragrant pies, and beg one or two to carry to the poor. These were his early lessons in benevolence.

George was somewhat of a tease in a brotherly way. His sisters came in for a full share in his playful roguery. Once upon a time his mother lectured him, with a mother's velvety words, for his besetting sin.

"Ah, George," said the good woman, "I do not know what I shall do with you, you are so roguish with your sisters!"

"Well, mother," was the reply, "I am glad I have some sisters and brothers, and I tell you what I want them to do: they must make a lot of money, for I shall want it some day for the good cause."

As he grew older he caused his mother great anxiety. He was intensely active. His vitality was so full that he could not be still. His restlessness alarmed her motherly instinct. She feared he might forget his home instructions and go astray.

One morning he went out expecting soon to return. Hours wore away, and he came not. His mother grew nervous with excitement. Such

an experience was unusual. She could get no tidings of her lost boy. At noon he returned, all radiant with the gladness of a good deed. He had met an old man, pale and sickly, trudging along with a great burden. He had offered his services ; had helped him home, and with a light heart had returned to allay his mother's fears. "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

George's generosity and kind deeds gained for him an unusual notoriety. His conduct was known to many who did not know his person. His name was once spoken in a public place, in the presence of a Unitarian minister. The clergyman turned and looked at him for a moment with deep interest, and grasping his hand said, "Are you the boy of whom I have heard so much among the poor?" He then thanked him heartily for his kindness to some of the indigent families under his care who had been relieved by George's ministrations. These are specimens of the spirit of the young missionary.

But we would not leave a false impression. George was not a saint. Sometimes, not often, corrupted human nature asserted its sovereignty. It was winter time. The ice upon the

canal had thickened with the increasing cold. He had a new pair of skates, and the desire to try their metal was at white heat. His mother had forbidden him to go upon the ice until its thickness should assure his safety. His obedience to his mother was usually unwavering; but this was a special case, and he fretted in his subjection. Falling in with some boys, his submission gave way before their solicitations, and, stealing away with his skates, he ran to the ice with his companions. For a time he rejoiced in his freedom and sport, but at last the treacherous ice gave way, and he was plunged into the cold waters. His comrades rescued him with difficulty, and when safely ashore, he saw standing at a distance his mother, shading her eyes with her hand, and looking in every direction for her lost boy.

With a heart palpitating with fear he ran to her side, his clothes stiff with ice, and his teeth chattering with cold and apprehensions of punishment. His mother took his hand in silence, led him home, and without a word of condemnation sent him to bed, and administered to him such remedies as would save him from injury. George fell asleep. Night came on; he awoke.

There, by his bedside, knelt his mother, her eyes red with weeping, praying for her guilty son. It broke his heart. He plead for a mother's pardon, and a mother's kiss, and he received them both. In that hour his obedience was perfected. Never again did he disobey her commands.

He was a great favorite with little children. When he came home from school, the little urchins of the neighborhood would turn out in shouting squads to greet him. It was no unusual sight to see him sitting on a doorstep, with a bright-eyed boy on either shoulder, and others wriggling around him, all crowing in childish ecstasy. These artistic groupings were but prophecies of those frequent ovations which he received in after years as he passed through the streets of Lawrence.

In very early youth George entered the Sabbath-school. He was somewhat of a torment in the infant class. Not that he was disobedient and sly, but restless—full of moving vitality. But at times he would come to the teacher's rescue. If she was not present at the immediate opening of the school, he would assume authority, hush the little ones into silence, and

keep order until the teacher came. His popularity and genial way gave him no little power over his peers, and oftentimes he would secure quiet when others would have failed. At an early age he was promoted to a class whose teacher was noted for tact and fidelity. Here he remained for years a faithful scholar. He always had good lessons. At twelve years of age he would quote from the Commentary of Dr. Clarke with ministerial gravity. His teacher gained a commanding influence over him. His letters and diaries abound in grateful allusions to her fidelity. Years after he had commenced his life work he acknowledged, in a letter to his teacher, the debt of gratitude he owed her for her faithful ministrations. That letter we give, as an encouragement to all who labor in this department of Christian activity:—

“LAWRENCE, MASS., *Sept.* 6, 1852.

“MY DEAR SISTER C——: I have wanted to see you for a long time, but have not had an opportunity. I called last July, but, unfortunately, you were away. I want to tell you how your prayers have been answered, and what God has done for me. Ever since I was a way-

ward child in your Sabbath-school class, at Worthen-street, your influence for good has been with me, and I thank my God now that you ever cared for my soul. Although seemingly careless and indifferent when you used to labor with me, yet your instructions took root, and, I trust, are now bringing forth some fruit. When far away upon the trackless ocean, or wandering in foreign climes, the influence of those Sabbath-school instructions were with me, restraining me from evil and leading me to do good. When far away from home, upon the ocean, I was led to give my heart more fully to God, and I resolved with his help to be a Christian, and if ever I was permitted to get home to New England again I would join the Church, and endeavor to do my duty to God, to the Church, and to my fellow-men. I have been trying to do this, and God has graciously blessed me—blessed me in my own soul, by filling it with peace and calm enjoyment and a blessed prospect of a home in heaven. And he has blessed me in being an instrument in his hands of turning some to righteousness. Since my dear mother was called home I have had nothing until very recently to keep me here,



and I have been so ungrateful at times as to find myself wishing to go too. It was a selfish wish, for God has been so good to me all my life-time that I feel it a duty to do all I can to advance the cause of Christ, and to stay just as long on this earth as he has any work for me to do. And when I cease to labor for God, or to be useful, I want him to take me away. My business gives me favorable opportunities for conversing with many people, and I shall have much more to answer for if I do not do my duty. I bless God that I am above all fear of man. My ambition is to be a true, humble servant of God; and I am willing to talk of Jesus, or distribute tracts, or pray with seekers, or do any thing else I can do. Forgive me if I do wrong in speaking so much of myself; I thought you would like to hear this. I have a Sabbath-school class that commenced with one scholar, Sister Abba S——, formerly of Worthen-street, Lowell, and now I have thirty, the most of them quite young ladies. I feel fully my responsibility as a teacher, and I realize the great aim of all teaching should be the salvation of the human soul. I have felt a deep solicitude for this class, and have labored much for them.

God has been with us, and that to bless these souls. The most of them are now Christians. Six have experienced religion within four weeks, and four more are now seeking. O, have I not reason to praise God for his great goodness to my class! Pray for us that we may be faithful. These souls give evidence of sound conversion. Our Church here is in rather a backslidden state.

“A great many of our members neglect to attend class, and are not punctual in other duties. Yet there is evidently a coming up to the help of the Lord. Many have been quickened and have set out anew. Our pastor urged me for a long time to take a class, and finally gave me one of fifty-five members, only about twelve of whom went to the meeting regularly. They were all old members, some of them old enough to be my grandfather. I told him I could not lead a class without seeing my members once a week. He got another leader for that class, and formed one of four members from other classes for me. I have now twenty-one regular attendants, ten of them new converts. But I do want your prayers that I may have grace and strength according to my need.

Sister Fanny, I suppose you have learned, is near her journey's end. Yes, my dear sister is soon to go home. Well, she is only going a few months before we shall have to meet her. She is happy, trusting in God, and willing to go. I cannot wish her to stay, yet it is hard to part with one after another of my family. But, bless God! they are all praising him around his throne, and by the grace of God we will meet them there, will we not? Remember me to Aunt M——, with much love; also to Sister K——, and all whom we mutually know. I should be very happy to hear from you. I am afraid I have written too much, but trust you will forgive me.

“May God bless you now and ever is the prayer of your brother,  
GEORGE.”

This letter gives us the key-note of his career. Self-consecration to God and a ruined race is the fundamental tone that runs with silvery harmony through the whole song of his life, and to which all its modulations are referred.

His educational advantages were limited. He received a good English training in the

grammar-school—no more. The necessities of his father compelled him to leave his studies, and assist in maintaining the family. The long illnesses of his brothers, the delicate health of his mother, and the decline of his father's strength, threw burdens upon him at an early age, that compelled him to lay aside his books and take up the tools of the mechanic. And yet we should do him gross injustice to call him illiterate or uneducated. True, he never received a diploma; but diplomas are not always truthful. Society has learned to distrust their testimony. Institutions of learning and rigorous courses of study are invaluable, but it is not every one who has enjoyed their advantages, and borne away their tokens of culture, who is educated. Mr. Wilson never graduated at a college or a high-school, but he had been subjected to a discipline that had made him superior to many who had nominally passed the examinations of these institutions. He had read and studied and meditated the best of books; he had been an attentive listener to the discussion of the profoundest questions; he had learned to examine, reflect, and hold opinions, and, for one of his years, had passed

through an excellent course of reading. It is all folly to call such a man uneducated, in comparison with multitudes who drag along lazily through the prescribed course of study, without any intelligent conception of its meaning, and come forth flaunting in the face of society a lifeless parchment. Let us confine ourselves within the boundaries of fact and say that he was denied educational advantages, which he regretted to the day of his death. Only a few months before his decease he said to his wife, "Emily, if somebody would give us enough money to support my family, I would go now and secure a thorough education." Possibly his life might not have been any more fruitful of good to the world had he received a collegiate training; but with the same spirit of consecration, I cannot doubt that, with his unselfish soul-life, his range of activities would have been wider, and his usefulness correspondingly increased. It is sad when we see young men compelled by home circumstances to forego a liberal education; but the history of Mr. Wilson is a perpetual reminder that even wanting these advantages—

"We can make our lives sublime."

One fact in his life demands attention just here. When eighteen years of age he visited the family of an uncle residing in Brooklyn, Connecticut. Here he made the acquaintance of his cousin, Myra, a young lady of rare qualities of mind and heart. Delicacy requires us to speak cautiously of the living, but this lady is so intimately associated with George's soul-life that we cannot do either justice without revealing the character of that friendship. Myra was a woman of varied culture, devoted piety, and benevolence of feeling. She saw with a woman's quick perceptions the noble nature of her cousin. She began a process of silent culture that inspired him with the holiest ambitions. It was just such a tuition as a boy of his years needed, a species of education too much neglected. At once the majesty of life burst upon him. He saw as never before his own deficiencies, and, with the simplicity of a child, he sought instruction and culture at her hands. A correspondence began between them that was continued through his life with the mutual devotion of pure friendship. I feel it a pleasure to express, in the name of a grateful public, our thanks to that Christian lady for the

influence of her character and culture upon the aims and ambitions of our departed brother.

Extracts from his letters to his cousin will be freely inserted in these pages as indicative of his inner life. One, written soon after his return home from Brooklyn, will reveal his interest in good works :—

*“ December 16, 1848.*

“MY DEAR COUSIN M——: . . . I make it a point to converse with one or more persons every day who are addicted to bad habits, and try to reform them. With a temperance pledge in one hand, an anti-swearing pledge in the other, and an anti-tobacco pledge in my pocket, I consider myself fully ‘armed and equipped,’ and almost daily I succeed in getting some signers. I will give you, cousin, an account of one of the happiest days of my life. The day before Thanksgiving . . . I went to the shop, and after working about an hour, I thought I would try and do something for ‘poor suffering humanity.’

“*Case 1.* A poor man was sick with consumption; had six motherless children, the oldest twelve. I thought that some ‘thanks-

giving' would be very acceptable. I got nine shillings with the intention of buying him a turkey, but finding that he needed the money the most, I let him have it. But I was determined that his children should have a feast, so I gathered together from our house and the neighbors a bushel of provisions, consisting of potatoes, apples, eggs, mince pies, etc., and if you could have seen the faces of those happy children it would have gratified your kind heart. Surely 'it is more blessed to give than to receive.'

"*Case 2.* A reformed drunkard who had been induced to sign the pledge. I knew he was destitute, and I went round and collected three dollars in about fifteen minutes. . . . We had to use great caution in presenting them, so as not to hurt his feelings, but succeeded, and the tears rolled down his cheeks when he told us he knew not how to thank us. . . .

"*Case 3.* A young man who is out of work, and considerably in debt. He tries as hard as he can to support his family, but owing to mismanagement is somewhat involved. He owed me five dollars, and knowing that this troubled him I forgave him the debt, 'for as we forgive



our debtors, so shall it be forgiven us.' I found when I got home that some unknown friend had sent us two beautiful turkeys. 'What measure ye mete shall be measured to you again.' After working all the afternoon in the shop I rode twenty miles to procure a temperance lecturer, for amid all the balls, theaters, etc., we thought we might have a temperance lecture."

Such was the school life of Mr. Wilson—a life of benevolent activity. Would that our colleges had such a department! In that case the barbarisms of hazing would be unknown. John Wesley and the godly band did have such a university education, but no thanks to Oxford.

Mr. Wilson's religious experience was characterized by no extraordinary epochs. In early youth his thoughts took deeper root, and he manifested a growing seriousness. But we will let him tell his own story.

"NASHUA, *May* 16, 1851.

"MY DEAR COUSIN MYRA: . . . Did we not at one time in our correspondence say somewhat of our religious experiences? I have felt

differently while away and since I came home than for some years before. When quite young I became deeply impressed with religious feelings, and gave my heart, as I thought, to the cause of God. I then joined the Church. In a little while after my mind became very much confused, and I went to my pastor and asked him to have my name taken from the Church books, and after much entreaty with me he took it off. I have since thought this to be the one great mistake, for while it may be possible to live a Christian life out of the Church, yet it is not so easy, especially with us Methodists, for we have many social gatherings where we meet together to speak of the goodness of God and pray for his blessing. After I had sailed for California I was exposed to much temptation to do wickedly. I then made up my mind if I would live happily on earth with my friends after my return, if I would be united with the members of the family who had gone to 'yon blissful region,' I must not yield to temptation, and, by daily prayer to God, I was kept in a great measure from evil. I then made up my mind that if I ever got back to my own dear New England I would join some Church, and

identify myself with some Christian people. Since I came to Nashua I have done this. I feel now more contented and happy, and a more earnest desire to get and do good."

Here is a case for study. By a fact stated in the letter we are enabled to settle quite definitely that George was twelve or thirteen years of age at the time of his first religious experience. Now what was that confusion of mind of which he speaks that led to his withdrawal? Incidentally, his Sabbath-school teacher has furnished the information. His child-conscience was offended by the unchristian conduct of certain Church members, and he was thrown by it into spiritual darkness.

"But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." The obstacle to child-religion is not so much in the child as in the Church. Mr. Wilson was no doubt exceedingly sensitive to right and wrong, and any conduct unbecoming a Christian would make deep impressions on his inexperienced mind. The fear lest he, too,

should be guilty of such actions would naturally throw him into a state of apprehension, and insensibly destroy his peace of mind. Possibly he lacked a confidential counselor in this crisis, and becoming more and more confused, gave way to despair, and withdrew from the Church lest he might injure the cause of God. O, how many truly converted children are left to go astray for want of Church nursing! It was his one great mistake, as he tells us, and I trust some tempted soul may be saved from a like disaster by his experience. Occasionally he attended the religious classes, but avoided an open espousal of religion.

At eighteen George's father died of that fell disease that had already taken away both of his brothers—consumption. These repeated bereavements wrought deeply upon his religious feeling. He drew gradually toward a life of faith in the Son of God, yet hesitated to take upon himself the vows of Church-fellowship, and thus stood aloof from a full committal to Christ.

About the time of his father's death he began to experience the premonitory symptoms to lung difficulties. Alarmed by the hereditary

tendencies of his family, it was thought advisable by his friends that he should seek a change of climate. The California gold fever was raging at that time with great violence. Thousands were leaving their homes for the new Eldorado. Marvelous stories were circulated of the climate, the richness of the gold diggings, and the fortunes acquired in a day. A party was forming in Lowell, and George, convinced that the disease which was upon him must speedily be shaken off or life forfeited, proposed to his mother to go to California in quest of health and gold.

Though as loth to part with her son as her own right eye, yet the dread of another visit from the dark-winged angel led her to give her consent to his proposal. In the spring of 1849 he arranged for his journey. And now I take pleasure in commending an act of kindness and confidence that proves how highly he was esteemed. Mr. Wilson was penniless. He was unable to meet the expense of such a trip. In this emergency ten persons came forward and loaned him the needed funds, taking no adequate security for its being repaid beyond his word. He gave them a pledge he would pay them

according to certain conditions if he could. It is not necessary for me to say it was paid to the last farthing, as some of the parties now living can testify. These obligations were canceled with the same fidelity as if bound by the best of legal documents.

It was April when he embarked, at Boston, on the sailing vessel "Areatus" for a passage to California by way of Cape Horn. He went out as a member of the "Bay State and California Mining Company," numbering about one hundred and fifty men.

While lying in Boston harbor he received a letter from his mother, which we give as a specimen of her feelings toward her son :—

"LOWELL, MASS., *April 1, 1849.*

"MY DEAR BOY: Your letter last evening was received with great joy. Not being able to learn all the week whether you had sailed or not, and the weather being so bad I could not get out to gain any information, I suffered considerable anxiety, and unless you had written I should have had a bad Sabbath to-day.

"I am glad you did not have to stay in Boston all these gloomy days. You cannot tell

how much you have been in your mother's heart, and how many times she has prayed that God would bless and cheer her beloved child, and overrule these delays for good, and teach you to look to Him who is the center of all happiness that is permanent. I have faith to believe that God will bless your undertaking. Pray on, my dear boy, and be assured your mother will never cease to pray for you as long as she breathes. May you have all the grace and courage you need to meet every emergency! and God will give it you, my son, if you continue to look to him. I called on Mrs. D——, and she kindly invited me to go with her to Boston to her friends, and we could go on board the ship and see you once more. I think I shall come, the Lord willing, with her, and perhaps go out and see M——. Fanny sends love.

“Dear, dear boy, good-bye till then.”

Thus we see George, as he journeyed to this distant land, living in the fullest enjoyment of a mother's supplications. It was not for wealth she prayed. Her pious heart appreciated other treasures more than gold. She sought for her son heart-purity, a holy life, and a safe return.

How often parents insensibly impress on their children a permanent unbelief in the integrity of Christians, resulting in their moral ruin, by a seeming or real indifference to the treasures of heaven, while they are incessantly prating about money, and the advantages of wealth.

The monstrous defalcations in our moneyed institutions may sometimes be traced to a pernicious home culture, magnifying the good of gold by a perpetual torrent of secular conversation, and being as dumb as stones about the superior excellence of a good name and a pure heart. Mrs. Wilson made no such mistake. She had trained her boy from the cradle to value reputation, manliness, purity of life, and integrity of character, far above the golden treasures of earth. Just before he sailed his mother visited him on shipboard. She gave him, as a parting token, a small book of Scripture texts, on the fly leaf of which was written :—

“ ‘ It was said of one, he feared not, had Heaven decreed it,  
To have stood averse against a world,  
And singly good.’ ”

“ Fear God, my son, and you need have nothing else to fear. From MOTHER.”



We shall see how her boy obeyed this heroic advice.

The parting scene was most affecting. Embracing her son with all the tenderness of a mother's love, amid blinding tears she lifted up her voice, and gave utterance to the sorrows of separation in these prophetic words: "George, I commend you to God, and though we never meet again, my prayers shall not be lost; you will be saved." They met no more on earth. Faith penetrates the vail of the invisible world, and discovers their glad reunion in the spirit-land. Mr. Wilson returned to his New England home to find it desolated by death, and his dearest earthly friend resting in the grave.

## CHAPTER III.

## CALIFORNIA LIFE.

ABOUT half past eleven on the morning of April 5, 1849, the "Areatus" swung away from her moorings in Boston, and commenced her voyage to the land of gold. Sea voyages are so similar, and so often described, that we pass over all allusions to the inevitable disgust of the first few days, and other incidents of ship-life, and invite the reader to those selections, from a very full diary, that unfold the character of the man as manifested in his new experiences :—

"*Thursday, April 19.*—Weather continues very pleasant. We are all quite well and happy. Our decks present a lively scene ; almost all are busy ; some usefully employed, others foolishly, and, perhaps, wickedly. It is not to be expected that one hundred and fifty men, coming together as we have, will all be strictly moral and virtuous. Thank heaven ! we have a large number who are conscientiously

upright, and maintain their integrity of character. Not that I think any of our company are willfully bad, or would be guilty of any flagrant offense ; but there are a great many who indulge in bad habits. The habit of profane swearing is the one I refer to more particularly. I am pained exceedingly to hear so much profanity. We have men, I am sorry to say, who cannot utter a single sentence without an oath. If persons would only consider how soon they become accustomed to this habit they would be much less inclined to commence it. At most times, no doubt, no harm is intended ; but the continual disregard of God's commands is certainly a heinous offense. It is so horrid to think that young men who are beginning life, who should see the necessity of strict principles and firm integrity, will yield to such a God-abhorred habit. I sincerely hope that some of our men will soon swear not at all."

"*Tuesday, June 5.*—To-day I have been reading 'Combe on the Constitution of Man ;' also have read two of Dr. Beecher's lectures to young men, which I must admire, because they are so truthful and plain. Would that more young men would profit by them ! For relaxa-

tion I occasionally read a little in Mrs. Hall's truthful and touching 'Lights and Shadows of Irish Life.'"

"*Saturday, June 9.*—We have been out sixty-six days, and have completed nearly half of our voyage, and a remarkably fortunate one thus far it has been. God grant it may continue so! How often in my thoughts am I carried back to my own fair, happy New England! How often am I reminded of a mother's love and prayers, and a sister's anxiety! How much I should delight to see them to-night, to assure them of my own safety, and hear of their welfare! How I would love to look on them all once more! I live in hope of returning to my native land and dear, dear friends. Not a day passes but I have thoughts of and pray for them."

"*Wednesday, June 20.*—Been reading Tupper's 'Crock of Gold.' It is an interesting, moral, and profitable story, and may be read with much advantage. I like Tupper, for I think he tries to elevate the lower class of people, purify their minds, and redress their wrongs."

"*Sunday, June 24.*—My mind has been prof-

itably employed to-day in reading my Bible and studying Wayland's 'Moral Science,' from which book I think one may derive a great many truths and lessons to be followed every day. I have also been reading the memoir of my beloved brother James, who is now, I have no doubt, in heaven. God grant that I may follow his worthy example, and one day meet him in that haven of rest! I am much pleased to see the Sabbath so well respected as it is by the majority of the association. But how unlike our own dear New England Sabbaths! I live in hope of once more enjoying those privileges. God grant it! Amen."

"*Wednesday, June 27.*—It is so cold that I cannot write to-night. Suffer considerably with cold feet. Have been reading Frost's 'Pictorial History of the United States.' Like it much."

"*Thursday, June 28.*—I manage to keep up my reading, though suffering much with cold feet."

"*Saturday, June 30.*—The tendency of our debating society, I think, will be beneficial, for it already has engaged the attention of some who heretofore were not so profitably employed."

This debating society, of which Mr. Wilson speaks, was extemporized to enliven the voyage and improve their talking talents. It is not in the order of things to bring together one hundred and fifty descendants of the metaphysical Puritans without a discussion. When Bishop Asbury rode into New England with a free and full salvation he was met at every point with the challenge "to argue the case." This society seems to have flourished for a time with great enthusiasm. The questions discussed were moral, social, and eminently practical ones.

"*Tuesday, July 2.*—To night our debating society held a meeting, and a very interesting one it was. The question was an exciting one, and most of the company have the right view of it, and, could our way be had, I think intoxicating liquors would be annihilated. Many sound and good arguments were advanced. The discussion occupied four hours, and we adjourned to meet again next Friday evening. Thus far I do not think I have been injured by the voyage, but improved, for now my mind is better able to resist temptation than when I started from home. For I have had it, and, thank God! have been able to resist it entirely.

We have good men as well as bad on board, and we can readily distinguish the one from the other ; and one has only himself to blame if influenced by the bad."

"*Tuesday, July 10.*—To-night we had a discussion on slavery : whether the Northern States were morally and politically responsible for the existence of slavery in the South—an able discussion for three hours and a half. Every question thus far has been decided on the moral and right side. We have some noble-minded men belonging to our society who are not afraid to speak what they think. I enjoy myself much in their society. It will be of much importance to myself whom I choose for my companions for the two years we shall spend in California, and it will be my endeavor to find out the best, *for I consider it of great importance.*"

And well he might. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." The best of blood will be corrupted in time by breathing a malarious atmosphere, and the noblest natures suffer likewise from bad associates. It is far better to be alone than to hold communion with a vile heart, unless we aim at once to remove the vileness. Antagonism to evil is the only

condition of the good. This simple principle became the law of Mr. Wilson's life, and by it he conquered.

*"Saturday, July 14.*—I am much interested in Wilkes' works. His description of Rio Janeiro is good, and I got many valuable ideas respecting the Brazilian government. He gives an interesting account of Patagonia and Terra Del Fuego. His description of the inhabitants is very curious. I still continue my reading, besides a chapter daily in my Bible, and a verse in the 'Daily Food.'"

*"Sunday, July 15.*— . . . Had Divine service to-day, which I attended, as I have all the services that have been observed aboard the vessel. The text to-day was from Matt. ix, 12: 'They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.' Our pastor, Bro. H——, preached, as usual, an earnest, touching discourse, comparing the sick in body to the sick in soul. May his preaching be productive of much good! I cannot make the Sabbath seem natural to me here, but I try to observe it in a proper manner, by reading proper books, etc."

This Sabbath diary is a type of many others. A regularly ordained and efficient minister;



still living and in active service, was officiating as chaplain to the company, and preached regularly every Sabbath. From the diary we learn that Mr. Wilson was a constant attendant on these services, and also the Bible-class and evening prayer-meeting. He speaks in the strongest language of the enjoyment he experienced and the profit he obtained from these religious exercises. Thus God was not forgotten, or his holy Sabbaths spent in idleness and pleasurable pastimes, but revered and kept as in his own New England home.

"*Thursday, July 19.*— . . . I have done one thing that I think will be of much importance ; I have changed my mess for the second time. The first mess I belonged to was the — mess. I left that because there were many bad men, drunkards, etc., and I could not associate with them. I went from there to the — mess, but found the same difficulty, for there were two or three there who neither feared God nor regarded man ; altogether too obscene in their conversation, and I could not endure it, and would not. I have joined the Nahant mess, from Lynn. They are moral men and good company, as good if not better

than any other mess on board. *I consider this the most important step I have taken.*"

Here we catch a glimpse of the morally heroic. This determination to classify himself with the best in character reveals his estimate of virtue, and the noble aspirations of his soul. How faithfully he adheres to the training of his youth.

"*Sunday, August 5.*—Four months to-day we started from 'Long Wharf,' in Boston. We have passed through many changes of climate, and are now permitted to look upon another Sabbath morning. Certainly we have abundant reason to thank God for his great goodness in preserving our lives, and continuing to us our health.

"May I ever feel thus! On the Sabbath, more than any other day, do I think of 'home, sweet home,' and my New England associations and religious privileges. I am continually anticipating my return to those happy scenes. Our chaplain has been sick to-day, consequently we have had no public services. I read, this morning, two sermons by Rev. L. Parker, of West Brookfield, on 'A good name is better to be chosen than great riches.' They were plain,

practical, simple, good discourses, and calculated to do much good, I think. Have also been reading 'Dick on Covetousness.' I do admire his writings. Also I read some in Wayland's 'Moral Science'."

"*Saturday, August 11.*— . . . Have been reading Henry Kirke White's Memoir. Have always been interested in his poems. They exhibit a mind of more than ordinary capacity, and some of them seem to be the truthful speakings of his soul. I admire them much. He certainly evinced extraordinary talent, and had he lived he would have held a high station among the poets of England. Have also been re reading the memoir of my eldest brother. When I compare my life with his, I am led to reflect on my sinfulness and neglect of duty. When I think that I have a father and two brothers in heaven, who are watching anxiously my course here, and whose pure and angelic spirits are pained to see any sin, I am led to try and act in such a manner as to give them no pangs. But how far short do I fall from doing this. May I be enabled to live the life of a Christian, that my last end may be like his!"

"*Wednesday, August 15.*— . . . I have been

much interested in the 'Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life.' The stories are simple, and of a religious character. O, I do like the Scottish character as exhibited here! There is something so noble and religious, their love so natural and warm and pure. . . . Have been reading Miss Bremer's 'President's Daughters,' which I like very much. I have read but very little fiction, but her writings I always admired—not the plot or story, but the truthfulness of the language and the elevation of the sentiments. She draws pictures of every-day life—model pictures that can be followed. Her stories are peculiarly home stories, and may do much good methinks."

"*Sunday, August 19.*— . . . I read my Bible until breakfast-time. I read the book of Ruth for my regular lesson, also in Psalms and Proverbs. . . . I then got out some of my loving old letters, and went up into the 'foretop' and read until supper-time. My heart was drawn again to dear old New England and my friends. After supper I read Tupper until dark. I am deeply in love with his prose writings."

"*Sunday, September 2.*—Had a fine sermon from our chaplain from Jer. viii, 28. It was

the most practical and earnest sermon he has preached on shipboard, and I hope productive of good. Had a Bible-class in the afternoon. How can our time be more profitably employed than in studying the great and important truths of the Bible. Would that every young man and woman felt the importance of these meetings more fully. In the evening we had a prayer-meeting, which was an interesting season. It is to be regretted that professors of religion in the company do not set a better example."

From these extracts we perceive from whence Mr. Wilson drew the inspiration of his useful life. His home-life gave him a mighty impulse toward the good, inspiring him with lofty purposes; but when he saw that sinking down beneath the horizon with all its blessed experiences, as he launched away on his life-voyage—just as his own loved New England hills had disappeared in his California expedition—then it was that he spread the canvas of his soul to other influences no less favorable to a successful manhood. What were they? Good books.

In the midst of circumstances of novelty and freedom, so naturally calculated to allure him

to merriment and frivolity, we find him, not yet twenty years old, rejecting all solicitations to idleness and folly, and improving his mind in the study of literature. And mark the character of his reading—poetry, history, moral essays, and sciences of the best quality, with the Bible as a daily text-book. Ah, now, it is all explained! The young man ate food, not froth. His intellectual diet made spiritual bone and muscle and nerve. Let the young ponder this point well. There is no royal manhood attainable without good thoughts and principles. These are largely suggested to the mind by the books we read.

It is a question whether the printing-press is doing society more of good or injury at the present day. Undoubtedly it is one of the grandest moral forces of the age. But we must not close our eyes to the fact, that Satan can use it as well as Christ.

Good books are being multiplied by the million, good papers are rivaling the stars in the number of their issues, but side by side with these inspiring facts stand the appalling lists of fictitious and frothy publications that are coming up, like the slimy-footed frogs of Egypt,

into every nook and corner of the land. These are highly seasoned with covert skepticism, spiced with improbable tales of love and adventure, and all on fire with the half-smothered flames of lust and worldliness. And this is becoming the mental food of the masses! What alcohol is to the body, such literature is to the soul. It stimulates, but consumes. It insensibly weakens the moral nature. How difficult it is to save a man thoroughly saturated with strong drink, but it is no less difficult to save a soul pervaded, by long indulgence, with the ideas and sentiments of such a pernicious species of literature. The Churches are just now discussing the grave question, "What becomes of all the professed converts to Christ, and why are multitudes so unstable?" The answer will be found in the literature they read; much of it makes society shallow, superficial, frivolous, loose-jointed, nerveless. And what did the Master of spiritual philosophy say of such persons? "And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time."

The pernicious nonsense they have read has made the heart as shallow as the dust on granite rocks, and what hope can we possibly cherish of a spiritual harvest from such a soil? "They have no depth of earth." Such souls become so mentally and morally enfeebled as to be incapable of any grand spiritual activities. The quality of self-denial is wanting and the heroic element dead. Such a soul, morally speaking, is but a grown-up infant, and if kept at all in the possession of spiritual life, it must be by the tenderest nursing of some sentimental minister, carrying it in his arms, and, ever and anon, dosing it with theological milk, sweetened and made palatable with rhetorical tidbits, until a pitying angel relieves him of his load, and takes the shriveled thing up higher.

It is refreshing, in the midst of such facts, to give to the world the example of a young man, exposed to every temptation to frivolity, turning to the highest order of reading because he loved it, and because, aspiring to be a man of usefulness, he believed this was the true method of attaining his sanctified ambition. May the rising generation emulate his example, and thus obey Paul's wise injunction to Timothy, to



“give attendance to reading!” The aim of a biographer should be to show what a man was, and not to produce an imaginary character. We judge the best way to accomplish this is to let the man speak for himself. The real life and purpose of any one is best revealed in his familiar talks with friends, when he never dreamed of having his unguarded utterances exposed to public examination. Fortunately we have many of the letters of Mr. Wilson preserved, and I gladly give some specimens to the reader as revelations of his inner life.

*“Monday, August 13, 1849.*

“DEAREST MOTHER: You may be surprised at the date of this letter, but I begin thus early that I may have ample time to inform you of the state of my feelings. I never knew, my dear mother, how much I was attached to home, to you, and to my sisters; for, as you may recollect, I never was away from you more than two weeks at a time. But now to be gone four months is hard, very hard. Both in dreams at night and musings by day do I dwell on thee, my mother; absence but strengthens my love. Just now my bedfellow was informing me that

last night I talked much of home in my sleep, and I seemed overjoyed to be with you again. My mother, God grant that it may one day be a reality ! No wonder I thought of you in my dreams, for my mind was much on home, and after service I took up the memoir of my dear elder brother and re-read it. It impressed my mind very solemnly ; it led me to call all the events of my life for the last ten years over in my mind. How humbled was I to see the humility and devotedness of those three dear ones who have gone before, and are now glorified spirits, and to compare their lives with my own. So unworthy do I appear to myself, that it is a wonder to me why God permits me to live. Such recollections serve to strengthen and confirm those moral and religious habits which I now daily see more and more necessity of forming. I love to talk and think of those dear friends in heaven. Perhaps I am indebted to Cousin Myra for turning my attention to these things. But I find such thoughts truly beneficial, and I find those who can sympathize with me who have lost near and dear friends. Think not, dearest mother, that I am made unhappy by these thoughts, for it is far otherwise.

Although I love to keep green the memory of my friends and childhood's home, yet these recollections do not for a moment deter me from carrying out the work I have now begun, for in connection with that I have coupled your happiness and that of my dear sisters. I am now pretty well convinced that with judicious management I may, in a short time, secure a comfortable competency, and then, dear mother, if money in any way conduces to happiness it is yours; and who will attempt to deny that a person with means cannot do more good in the world than one without? You well know already my purpose in coming on this expedition; but, methinks, I hear you say, 'My dear boy will be disappointed, he will not realize his expectations.' Those expectations are already beginning to be realized; and fear not, O my dear anxious mother, I shall be disappointed if I gain no pecuniary advantage, for I have a good strong constitution, and two active, willing hands that will always find something to do. By all honest ways I shall endeavor to get gold. If these fail me then I am satisfied, and I shall immediately go to work at my trade, or some other honorable, honest employment.

“I said my expectations have already begun to be realized. Do you not recollect the reason, and the only one you would accept, for my leaving Lowell to start on this expedition? It was that it would benefit my health, was it not, my dear mother? I wish you could see me now. I weighed in Valparaiso twenty pounds more than I did when I started from Boston. I feel very well every way—have had only one slight cold, and that I got over in a few days. I take two or three hours’ exercise every day, and being so much in the open air, my lungs grow stronger; and if your only boy is no richer when he returns, he will have a stronger constitution and a better cultivated mind, I hope. . . . Perhaps some of those gentlemen who fitted me out may think, that if I am so disposed I may try and avoid my agreement. *But I consider it a matter of honor on which, perhaps, my future reputation depends, or if my reputation does not, my peace of mind does.* I have written on the back of the copy of agreement with them, which I have, these words: ‘As the “Bay State and California Mining and Trading Company” is now no more in existence, this agreement may seem to be null and void. But, notwith-

standing the company has dissolved, I consider myself bound by ties of honor to fulfill my agreement, just the same as if the company still existed, and shall endeavor so to do if my life is spared, and in case of my decease it is my earnest wish that they shall have justice done them.' Is that not as it should be, my dear mother? I consider it a matter of honor, and must act so as to have a conscience void of offense. . . . I do not intend in my letters to give much account of my voyage, for I want to pour *my whole soul* out to you, and I would that you could look into my heart, and read my inmost soul. How much I regret that I have not paid more attention to correspondence, for I am fearful that I shall be hardly able to write readable letters; but I know that my friends will excuse style if I only write. I feel much for my dear sisters, Eliza, Fannie, Mary, and Ella, and it is my intention to write to all of them. I hope Ella has not forgotten her brother George, who thinks so very often of her happiness. May she ever be as free from sin as I think she was when I left! Dear mother, as much as it is in your power let my sisters continue to improve their minds by study, and

by letter-writing. I am satisfied it will hereafter be of great benefit to them. Have them write to their friends and relatives ; it will be one of the best ways of improving their grammar and style in writing, and a familiarity and practice of putting their thoughts on paper will expand their minds. Please excuse me for attempting to give any advice, and do not consider me presumptuous, for I have this subject near at heart, and am convinced that their future happiness depends much, very much, upon the cultivation of their minds. So soon as I realize any pecuniary advantages it will be a great source of happiness to me to furnish means to have Fannie, Mary, and Ella pursue their education, if they and you wish it. I would say, if Fannie or Mary have not formed any engagements, if they knew how very much depends for future happiness on this, they would be extremely careful. You have not, perhaps, so much knowledge of the hearts of the young men of the present age as I have, or the deceitfulness of human nature. There are but very few young men that I am acquainted with with whom I would dare to trust the happiness of my dear sisters. I am well aware their

instructions have been many, and none better than from the lips of a mother; yet the world is full of temptations in thousands of shapes. Mother, I know more of the deceitfulness of man than I did when I first started. There are men here who by their conversation and manner you would think pure and sinless, who are inwardly polluted and rotten to the core. I do not like to judge, but I am forced to believe what I would to God were untrue. All the restraints of society seem to be away from them, and they act as if they cared not for their reputation or for God! . . . God has been very merciful unto us. Now farewell, dear mother."

A letter to his sister Fannie, written just before reaching San Francisco, reveals Mr. Wilson's views of true womanhood. We give a copious extract:—

" . . . You know I am not a sermonizer, yet I have my own ideas of what constitutes beauty in a female. Dear sister, strive to adorn yourself with a beauty of mind; strive to cultivate those ennobling qualities you have ever possessed. Still continue to be amiable in disposition, and you will be loved by all your

acquaintances. Do not throw away too much time in adorning your person, but cultivate your mind, and you will have a solace in every time of affliction. Strive to get information from books as much as possible, they will give you other people's ideas and acquaint you with other nations; but avoid almost all works of fiction, they only enervate the mind and destroy a taste for solid reading. Above all books stands prominently the Holy Bible. I have derived much comfort in reading 'Tupper's Proverbial Philosophy.' It has been a great companion to me, and I advise you to read it."

"PACIFIC OCEAN, *August 16.*

"MY DEAR COUSIN MYRA: . . . For several years before I came to Brooklyn I had desired to make my life one of usefulness. My aim was to do good, but my mind was weak, very weak; for since I had learned to love study, my duty to my father had forbidden me to indulge in it. I felt myself unable from my excessive labor to improve my mind. And believe me, my dear cousin, I felt my heart grow colder toward my fellow-men, although I endeavored to feel and sympathize with the joys and woes of



others. But I did keep alive a little flame of love to God, nature, and men, in my bosom. At length my father was taken sick, and with the increased care and excessive labor I became sick also. I had many friends around me who comforted me, yet I had no one to whom I could lay bare my inmost soul but God. I had the impression that my father was not long to remain with us, and I thought of mother—that mother I loved with my whole soul. I prayed God to spare my life yet a little while, to cheer and comfort her, that her last days might be her best. God heard my prayer. I became better, and it was recommended to me to journey, and dear Aunt M—— put it into my head to visit your father's family. I did so, and, as you know, my first impressions were not favorable toward my educated cousins. I felt my own inferiority, and thought you would cause me to feel it more. 'I came, I saw, I was conquered' by your gentleness. Those feelings that were nearly dormant in my breast were aroused by your conversation. I learned to love holy things more ; my mind was strengthened ; and I returned home better able to combat with the world, better able to resist tempta-

tion, and do my duty to those I loved. Since that time your regularly received loving letters have kept the flame burning more brightly. . . . I cannot say much of my mind. It needs discipline, much hard study, before I shall accomplish any good. The voyage has been beneficial to it. I read the Bible with much pleasure: I am more conversant with Tupper and Wayland's 'Moral Truths' strengthen me: Dick gives me nobler sentiments, and a love for truth and holiness: Combe's 'Constitution of Man' enables me to have a better view of myself. I have been reading Frederika Bremer's 'President's Daughters.' You first taught me to love her writings by your beautiful readings of 'Brothers and Sisters.' . . . I have been in Sunday-school since I was four years old, and I intend to be always connected with it." . . .

On Saturday, September 22, 1849, the ship "Areatus" anchored in the harbor of San Francisco. The original Company had already broken up into fragments. Mr. Wilson attached himself to that portion that he considered morally the best, consisting of fourteen men, calling themselves the "Nahant Company," and at the

earliest period possible they pushed on to the mines. October 29 he pronounces a memorable day. "Eight of us have dug about twenty dollars of *gold, pure virgin gold.*" We return again to the Diary for such expressions as show us the man in the rough life of a gold digger.

"*Sunday, November 4.* . . . We intend to keep the Sabbath strictly, having religious services, reading the Scriptures, and prayer. We shall do no unnecessary work, and endeavor to live as we did in New England. . . . My correspondence with my Cousin M—— has been of much benefit to me. Her piety, her loving kindness toward me, have subdued very much of the roughness of my nature, and made me more considerate of others' feelings. . . . I have been led to think what a blessing to have had such a mother as I have had; who for years has set me such a daily example of Christianity: her gentleness, her meekness, her forbearance, all come before me. I thank thee, O God, for such a mother; and I pray that I may never dishonor her; and may I be enabled to make her last days her best."

"*Monday, November 26.* . . . In reading

'Franklin's Life,' and Alcott's 'Hints to Young Men on a High Aim,' I have been led to think of my own misspent life—of my want of aim, of system, of the little I accomplish. I am led to resolve that I will spend as much time as possible in *reading, studying, and writing*. I will make the hour of ten my hour of retiring, and, as the rest retire early, this will be the best hour for me to write. I hope to get some valuable information this winter in these California woods: and if I get home safely with any capital I intend to apply myself assiduously to study, for this state of things *will not do*, I must not grow up in *ignorance*."

"*Tuesday, November 27.* . . . I thank God that my parents always impressed upon me my duty to my fellow-men, especially to be benevolent. I think I never am happier than when *giving*. How many a basket load of provisions my mother has sent by me to her poorer neighbors!"

"*Sunday, January 10, 1850.* . . . I have got five hundred dollars to pay the gentlemen who fitted me out, and fifty dollars besides, and I am happy to spend my first earnings in so good a cause as to help get an unfortunate man home."

The person spoken of was an acquaintance of Mr. Wilson's who had been taken ill on his arrival in California, and had spent all his money, and was sick, friendless, and penniless. The first earnings of the young gold digger were freely given up to help the sick man home.

The Company, not realizing all they expected in their first diggings, removed to another place. A Sabbath was spent in Coloma. Here Mr. Wilson's soul was stirred within him, as deeply as Paul's at Athens, when he saw the wickedness of the place.

*"February 18.— . . .* There is much liquor sold and much drunkenness here. I do most heartily despise men who will pursue this most dishonest mode of procuring a livelihood. I had rather die than sell liquor. It will be my endeavor so to live as to meet my friends with an unsullied conscience."

*"Sunday, February 24.—*The only sign of devotion I saw to-day was an aged negro reading the Scriptures aloud to three other colored men. O how much wickedness there is in this place! My heart is pained within me to see the recklessness of men."

About the first of February the news of his

mother's death reached him. The blow fell heavily on his sensitive, loving heart. His love for her is expressed in terms of intense endearment, and his sorrow at her loss was of a deep, manly nature. His letters to his sisters reveal great solicitude for their welfare, and, like a loyal brother, he at once offered himself as their earthly protector. These letters abound in the sagest counsels, in expressions of hope that he may have ability to aid them in securing a better education, and in profound thanksgivings to God for comforting his heart under his great trial with his abounding grace. They are filled with attestations of the worth of his departed mother, of her holy influence over her family, especially himself, and the inexpressible feeling of loss that grows upon him as the weary months drag on. Did space permit these letters should be inserted; but as my purpose is not to multiply words, but to open the heart of a man, and let the public read his purposes and aspirations, I pass on to other scenes in his career. One incident in his California experience, related by a bosom friend, is too touching to be omitted. One day Mr. Wilson was with a party of acquaintances in a

public house. A wild, shaggy backwoodsman, loaded with deadly weapons, and as lawless in the use of them as a Kansas squatter of bloody memories, came in and invited the party to drink, supplementing his invitation with the dastardly threat, that if any refused he would shoot him on the spot. All but one acceded at once, and ranged themselves at the bar. That one was Mr. Wilson. He stood by the door calm and unmoved. The outlaw looked upon him much as Goliath surveyed the stripling David, and approaching him with horrid oaths, and a revolver pointed at his brain, bid him take his place and drink or he would make good his threat. Mr. Wilson requested him to hear his reasons for doing as he did. His request was granted. He told him of his mother, of the parting scene, of the pledge he had given her never, never to drink intoxicating drinks. "And now," said he, "would you have me break my pledge?" The man replaced his pistol, commended him for his fidelity to his mother's trust, and left him unharmed, in his untainted nobility. That heroism of soul runs like a golden thread though his whole life.

In September he turned his footsteps homeward. He had gained his great purpose, health. He was physically vigorous and strong, and morally as unspotted as when he left New England. His mind had been improved by extensive reading and observation, and his whole manhood broadened. Without much gold to remunerate him for his many months of wearying labor, he left California about October 1st, 1850, for "home, sweet home." The passage gives us no diary. The reason is given by Rev. Mr. H——, of the New England Conference. He was a passenger on the same ship and helplessly sick, and Mr. Wilson devoted his time to his care with the fidelity of a brother. His was a life of ministry. "He went about doing good."



## CHAPTER IV.

## THE PREPARATION PERIOD.

MR. WILSON returned to Lowell in the early days of 1851, adjusted his business with those who had so kindly befriended him, cheered his sisters in their orphanage, visited his mother's grave, and then turned his face to the future. He was prepared for any toil or personal sacrifice required to secure an honorable livelihood. He might have returned to his old post in the machine shop, but the conviction that his health would not endure such confinement led him to seek some other employment. Through the kindness of relatives in Nashua, New Hampshire, a clerkship in a grocery store was offered him. He accepted the position, and entered at once upon his new duties. These relatives to whom he was thus indebted were of the Unitarian persuasion, and it might have seemed both generous and politic for him to join them in their Church associations. But it was not like him to forget

the faith of his parents, or act in such matters from any personal motives. His first step was to inquire for a Methodist Episcopal Church, and on being informed that there were two in the city he asked for the weaker one, and to it he went at once and offered himself as a probationer. How sharp the contrast between his course and that of many! He sought the weaker society, where he was most needed. Many avoid such Churches, and seek the strong, the popular, the influential, where they may find ease and social satisfactions. He immediately announced his presence, and united with the toiling band; while very many hide away in the home cloisters, and grumble at the coldness of Christians and the indifference of ministers. The first Sabbath he attended church, the pastor, Rev. Mr. M'L——, unexpectedly announced that he would address the Sabbath-school the next Sunday. Hesitatingly, he came forward at that time and made his maiden speech. He narrated some of the incidents of his California life, and did it so graphically and modestly that the school, then wanting an assistant superintendent, charmed with his simple and earnest spirit, at the suggestion of the pastor elected

him to the vacant office. A young lady, a teacher in the public schools, not relishing the prospect of a speech from one so young, anticipating only a boyish harangue, passed out as he rose to make his address, and went home. She afterward repented of her conduct when she had seen more of the new official. With this young lady boarded a friend, also a teacher in the city schools. She frequently extolled their new superintendent in the hearing of her companion, who was a Baptist, and on one occasion invited her to attend a Church sociable, where it was supposed Mr. Wilson would be present. The invitation was accepted, and at that interview Mr. Wilson met, for the first time, the partner of his life and labors. One circumstance occurred then that made a deep impression on her mind. The pastor was away, and he was requested to lead in prayer. He knelt all alone in the crowded room. This act struck her as noble and heroic, indicative of a true manhood. Soon after he took board in the same family, and thus providentially thrown together, friendship ripened into intimacy, and intimacy into a heart union that was productive of the ripest joy to both.

Mr. Wilson entered upon his Sabbath-school work with the greatest enthusiasm. The superintendent was absent, and the whole responsibility rested upon his shoulders. Writing to his Cousin Myra, he says: "I have constantly felt my unworthiness and incapacity for this station, yet, as I was earnestly requested to take it, I endeavor to fulfill the duties to the best of my ability. When I commenced we had ninety-five scholars; last Sabbath we had upward of one hundred and twenty. . . . While absent one Sunday I was made life-member of the Missionary Society by the payment of twenty dollars by the school. I felt perfectly confused when told of this, so unexpected and so undeserved, and my remarks the next Sabbath in acknowledgment were disconnected enough, I assure you."

In another letter he says: "Our school has nearly doubled in three months, and out of a congregation of two hundred persons, one hundred and eighty belong to the Sabbath-school." So much for a live superintendent.

In the fall a larger salary was offered him in a dry goods store. He accepted the place, and thus writes to Myra: "Mr. B—— gave me an offer to work for him, which seemed so advan-

tageous that I concluded to accept. The prospect is I can make more money at this than any thing else, and money is one of my *gods*, you know. I love it so well that I have given away more than sixty dollars since coming to Nashua. . . . I do admire the colporteurs who live to do good in that self-sacrificing, holy way by going about from house to house with good books and cheering words of love and consolation. If I really felt it my duty I would do it now, and trust in God for my support."

In a later letter he remarks : "I find there is more real enjoyment in one act that has made a fellow-being happy than in many hours of amusement or trifling conversation."

In the mean time the confinement in the store proved unfavorable to Mr. Wilson's health. A change was imperatively demanded. His uncle, then postmaster in the new city of Lawrence, offered him a position as letter carrier, and, hoping such an out-door life might benefit his declining health, he accepted, and removed thither January 1, 1852. Many were his regrets at leaving his Sabbath-school work in Nashua, but a still wider field of usefulness was opened for him by the hand of God.

And now we approach the scene of twenty years of faithful toil for the Master. Thirty years ago the coy and graceful Merrimack, having turned the spindles of Lowell, and wound its devious way among the low hills that lay to the eastward, passed over a rocky rapid, flanked on either side by barren sandbanks and bushy marshes. Here came the calculating capitalist, and, scanning the natural fall, pronounced it a favorable spot for a manufacturing city. A company bought the adjacent land, secured the water-power, constructed a dam of granite across the river over forty feet in height, and a canal one mile in length of immense capacity, and invited capital to come in and build industrial establishments. The result is marvelous. A city has sprung up over these places of desolation containing thirty-five thousand inhabitants, with all the institutions and benevolent appliances of a great metropolis, with large manufacturing interests and enterprising corporations, whose fabrics may be found in every part of the Union. In the youthful days of Lawrence Mr. Wilson came to find a home. He grew with her growth, has left his footprints upon her sands, and the memory

of his noble life deeply fixed in her generous heart.

On his way to his new home he called at Lowell, and visited the graves of his family. Thus he writes to his cousin :—

“LAWRENCE, *Jan.* 13, 1852.

“MY DEAR COUSIN MYRA: . . . I visited the graves of my parents and brothers while in Lowell, and as I knelt in the deep snow upon my mother’s grave I prayed that her pure spirit might be permitted to watch over and guide her boy, and I do believe my prayers will be answered. I felt peaceful and happy, and whatever may be my lot, I hope to be a Christian in the truest sense of the word.”

How beautiful the beginning of his Lawrence life! Can any thing be more touching than the sight of the orphan boy kneeling upon his mother’s grave, and pleading for the benedictions of her spirit as he goes forth, like the brave patriarch, into a land whither the Lord is leading him. Arrived in Lawrence, he commenced at once his new labors. He can best tell us what they were :—

'LAWRENCE, *Jan.* 23, 1852.

"MY DEAR COUSIN MYRA : . . . I must give you some account of my business. It agrees with my health excellently. I have already begun to gain flesh and to feel well again. I commenced last Monday in that storm. I came very near being frozen twice, yet I stood it pretty well. Tuesday was a little better, but very cold. I have now learned where to find nearly every house, garret, cellar, and alley in town. But it is much harder for me to learn the names. I carry letters to fifteen hundred people, and am obliged to look over *all* the letters that come into the office, and pick out those that I deliver. It will require some time to learn this.

"There are many pleasant things about the business, and some unpleasant ; but I get far more blessings than curses. I have an admirable opportunity to pursue a favorite study of mine—*human nature*. I am obliged to be in the office to select my letters when the mails come in. I generally go out at half past nine to deliver them, and get through at one, except a part of my route which lies on the south side of the river. I go over there on the mail-



coach, so that I have two or three miles' ride every day, which I enjoy exceedingly. I spend my evenings in the office, attending the delivery until half past eight, when we close up. From that time until ten I write and read. Tuesday evenings I go to class-meetings. I have written you about these meetings. I now feel the need of them very much. My mind is kept in such a continual state of excitement I need to go at least one evening in the week to meet with the children of God, and speak together of our joys and sorrows, and cheer and comfort and pray for each other. O I do think class-meeting, as held among the Methodists, are the most useful social meetings we have among Christians! I have never been so happy, so cheerful, and never have felt more like praising God than now. And frequently when alone in my daily route I find myself praising him aloud. You speak of the balls, parties, etc., of our M—— friends. I think there is more real enjoyment in relieving the necessities of the needy, more real enjoyment in giving a poor boy a pair of shoes, than in a whole winter's series of such festivities."

Very soon after going to Lawrence he united

by letter with the Haverhill-street Methodist Episcopal Church. He did not join as a silent partner. The first Sabbath evening in his new religious home he rose in his place, confessed his faith in Jesus, and his desire to sit as a disciple at his Master's feet. His modesty and manliness won him friends at once, and gained him a spiritual home. Mr. Wilson never asked for office or recognition. His native sense of propriety taught him never to seek promotion. He wisely took the humblest seat among his fellow-Christians, did his duty quietly and modestly in the place that was opened to him, and went up higher only as invited by providential indications. He sought no responsibilities, but they speedily sought him. It would be better for God's cause if all Christians had the same rule of action. The double witness of the Spirit is as applicable to official relations in the Church, as to those of the individual soul with God. God calls men to special duties indirectly through men, as well as directly through one's own convictions. So thought Mr. Wilson, and acting thus he made no mistakes.

Immediately after joining the Church he was

called to teach a class in the Sabbath-school. Commencing with one scholar, in a short time he had four pews filled. This is not strange. Bees fly for flowers where the honey is to be found, and it is not likely that hungry souls will not speedily discover where the sweetness of the Gospel is dispensed. Mr. Wilson fed his class with the bread of life, and within one year every member of it had found the Saviour. We give some of the feelings of his heart as he taught about Jesus.

*"March 9, 1852.*

"MY DEAR COUSIN MYRA: . . . On Sunday my mind was so agitated, and so solemnly impressed with my responsibilities as a Sabbath-school teacher, that I had almost made up my mind to give up my class. As I thought the matter over it occurred to me that it would be cowardly to shrink from a known duty, and I resolved, with the help of my heavenly Father, to go on, and do my duty as I saw it. I have gathered around me in these six weeks a Bible-class of twenty-three ladies, old and young, and I do feel real sad to go into the school and have so large a class, when other teachers near me, who are far better Bible scholars, have

only four or five pupils. This is all owing to personal effort of the class and myself. On Sunday I told my class of my trials, and endeavored to give them a faithful warning."

In addition to this class Mr. Wilson was soon appointed by the pastor a leader, and in this department he was equally successful. These new responsibilities quickened his spiritual life and led him to richer experiences.

*"May 18, 1852.*

"MY DEAR COUSIN MYRA: . . . Before I close I must say one word of my Christian experience: I think I never was so peaceful and happy in my mind as now. I have been trying to examine my heart closely, to bring 'my soul and I' together. I have thought much of my dear friends who have gone 'Home,' and have earnestly prayed that my life might be so pure, that when I am called I can join them and praise God forever. I pray more than I ever did before."

But this was not all of his Christian labors. There were at that time a number of young

men in the Church, some of whom were moderately active, others dull and spiritually lifeless. Mr. Wilson drew them to himself, infused into them a measure of his own religious enthusiasm, and brought them one by one to life and duty. Some of these young men are now living, some have gone forth as chosen vessels of salvation, and with tears of gratitude they tell us of him who inspired them afresh with the love of Jesus. These brotherly associations were always dear to him, and he never spoke of these friends and their usefulness without a feeling of manly pride. During this first year in Lawrence he became deeply interested in a life of the fullest consecration.

*" July 20, 1852.*

"MY DEAR COUSIN MYRA: . . . You say since you last wrote 'your desires for goodness have been strengthened, and your spirit has received a new impetus in its strivings for a holier and better life.' O, my cousin, would that I could, as you desire, see you, that we might speak of these things! My own spirit, too, has received a new impetus. I think I have seen more clearly my obligation to God,

and have realized more fully his great goodness to me in the abundance of his mercies bestowed upon me. My heart has been striving for a purer, holier life. Would our heavenly Father have bidden us do any thing that could not be performed, and are we to understand the passage 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord' as a mere empty sound? The human mind can hardly compass the mighty thought—entire purity, holiness of heart. I dare not say it is not attainable; indeed, I may say I have seen it exemplified in the holy life of others. I have a good brother here, a young man of my own age, who is preparing for the ministry, who has been feeling deeply on this subject, and for a month past we have held weekly meetings to talk over this matter and pray for ourselves. These meetings have resulted in great good to us. Thoughts like these are constantly with me: Here am I, professing to be a follower of Jesus, going around among the people every day, speaking to hundreds: do I carry the impress of my Divine Master with me always; do I act worthy of the name of Christian, and 'my soul and I' dare not always meet?"

This letter gives Mr. Wilson's views and soul-hungerings in his early life. He read and reflected much at that time upon the subject of personal holiness, and being convinced of the reasonableness of the doctrine, he drew near the cross, and consecrated soul, body, and spirit to God, laying all that pertained to him upon the altar of sacrifice, and believing them accepted left them there, and in the fullness of the Spirit went out to his life-work, and prosecuted it to the day of his death.

We are not aware that he ever made a public profession of holiness, as technically demanded by some of its enthusiastic advocates. His position on that special point was simply this: I will, by the power of the Holy Ghost, be pure in heart, full of love to God and men, and show them, by my Christ-like conduct and spirit, just how far I have progressed in grace. He felt assured that what his daily life would not tell of soul-purity it was useless to attempt to circulate through the depreciated currency of speech. And yet he was a swift advocate of Christian testimony. He laid great stress on a public espousal of Christ. He was by no means a dumb disciple. Every-where, in public and pri-

vate, his conversation was deeply spiritual. He especially loved class-meetings, was a devoted leader for years, and in that capacity made it his constant aim to perfect holiness of heart and life in his members. His personal testimony was freely given, was always sweet, restful, soul-inspiring ; he lived a consecrated life every moment, holding nothing back from God, and always spoke of a present and complete Saviour in the most confident manner ; and yet the fact remains that he never satisfied some who wanted a more formal acknowledgment of personal holiness. He was frequently taken to task for his silence. He was often urged to seek and profess the blessing technically, and sometimes was flayed, of course in a brotherly way, for not taking a public stand as a holy man. These are the facts ; the reader may draw his own conclusions.

In the early part of 1853 a Sabbath-school was organized in the eastern section of the city, and Mr. Wilson elected its superintendent. A few weeks after the school was expanded into a regular Church organization, and assumed the name of the Garden-street Methodist Episcopal Church. Mr. Wilson was one of the



leaders in the enterprise, uniting with it, and taking on himself its heaviest burdens. He stands on its records as the first trustee elected : was president of the board at the time of his death : was its Sabbath-school superintendent until 1860, when his mission duties made resignation imperative : was for years steward, class-leader, and general financial agent, and the wheel-horse of almost every important committee. The history of Garden-street Church is so interwoven with his life, that if his labors were taken out of the record the fragments that remain would look like the remnants of an explosion. Two facts in its history are too precious to be lost. In its earliest days the congregation worshiped in a hall. The place was not convenient, and it was determined to furnish it for the purpose. The Society was small and poor. Mr. Wilson had just purchased a small house for his bride, had furnished his parlor, and was commencing house-keeping. When, however, he saw their place of worship untenable for want of a little money, he and his young wife sent their new parlor furniture to the auction rooms, and with the proceeds helped to fit up the hall for God's

glory. Years after, when the panic of 1857 produced business stagnation and distress, the new church edifice was in danger of being sold for debt. Times were hard, and there were no persons of wealth in the Society on whom they could depend in such a crisis. Some, almost discouraged, were ready to abandon the enterprise, having, as they supposed, done the best they could. But Mr. Wilson said, "No, it shall not be! I will sell my house first." And inspired with his spirit, they pushed on through every trial. He needs no better monument in Lawrence than the Garden-street Church.

April 7, 1853, one year after his removal to Lawrence, he was married to Miss Emily O. Fisk, of Nashua, N. H. Henceforth he had a companion who shared all his joys, and assisted in bearing all his burdens of benevolence. In another place this home-life of his shall claim special attention.

And now we approach a little secret history. Mr. Wilson had served the city as penny-post seven years, was universally respected, and had proved faithful in all his duties.

In February, 1859, he was dismissed by the postmaster, "and thereby hangs a tale." In

the issue of the "Lawrence American," February 29, appears this editorial item: "Last week Postmaster W—— removed from his employ George P. Wilson, who has held the place of penny-post under three different administrations, who is personally and officially esteemed and universally popular, whose customers are unanimously in favor of his continuance, whose faithfulness and honesty are above reproach, and against whom not one syllable could be urged but his opinions in politics. Mr. Wilson, like an honest man, refused to bow the knee to Baal, refused to truckle to the wishes of political demagogues, refused to use his position to serve the personal and political schemes of the postmaster at the expense of the public, refused to become a tool and puppet, and he is therefore supplanted by one less conscientious and more pliant; he is succeeded by an Irish Catholic democrat of the doubly-twisted bunker stripe."

Making all due allowance for partisan intensity, the statements of this article are in the main correct. In the next issue of the paper Mr. Wilson, with his characteristic love of fair play, says that the postmaster never sought to

control his vote, or demand his political services, but he does not deny that he was removed solely for political reasons. This fact is plainly manifest. Now what an illustration is this of the corrupting power of politics! What a wretched system that must be that ignores the public good to gain party ends! This postmaster was personally a warm admirer of Mr. Wilson, as proved by his acts, soon to be narrated, yet he sacrifices him in the interests of party craft. The facts were that Mr. Wilson was a man with a conscience, and he could not indorse the violence and proslavery tendencies of the administration. He would speak out of his great soul for justice even though it cost him his position. He was an outspoken enemy of wrong, and the price he paid for his manliness was dismissal from the post he had held so long and served so faithfully.

All hail! say we to such manhood. But while we praise his fidelity to his convictions of right, let us heap eternal anathemas on that partisan policy that demands such a course under the plea of party exigency. The blame rests more heavily on the system than on any individual. The system is nothing less than a

gigantic method of corrupting American citizens, and should be abolished at all hazards ; and the man who upholds it, as it has been practiced in the past, is unworthy the suffrages and confidence of any community. A man of less nobility of nature than Mr. Wilson would have concealed his views by silence, or practiced the arts of the politician to keep his position, and would thus have had his conscience eaten up with the political dry-rot ; but, thanks to stern principle ! such is not the story we have to tell. Would that all Christians would go and do likewise in all similar circumstances of temptation ! Indeed, this is the only path of safety, and he who hesitates is periling his immortal soul.

## CHAPTER V.

## MISSION WORK IN LAWRENCE.

IN December, 1854, a meeting of the benevolent citizens of Lawrence was called to consider some measures for the relief of persons temporarily needy. From this meeting sprang the Lawrence Provident Association. Its organization was very simple. With the usual list of officers connected with every society, there were certain persons appointed in each ward to search out needy cases and distribute its funds. These were raised in the several Churches, and by private contributions. The great defect in the system was its lack of personal responsibility. It needed unity of action, a centralizing mind.

In February, 1859, the postmaster, then editor of the "Lawrence Sentinel," anticipating the removal of Mr. Wilson from his employ for political reasons, and not relishing such an act toward one whom he truly esteemed without some token of friendly feeling, suggested in an editorial the propriety of changing the organiza-

tion of the Provident Association, so as to make it more effective, by the appointment of a city missionary. The suggestion met with universal favor. Acting upon this public feeling, in the next issue of the paper, February 26, 1859, appeared this editorial item:—

. . . “The real want is a good man, a practical Christian of sound judgment, a heart devoted to the cause of benevolence, and a mind as little biased with sectarianism as may be reasonably expected. The undertaking is favored by the fact that we have such a person among us, Mr. George P. Wilson.

“He has been long and favorably known to the citizens of Lawrence, and his acquaintance with the character, history, and necessities of the poor in this city is excelled by none other. It is a singular proof of his fitness for the place, and the general favor his appointment would meet with, that, of a recent article in the ‘Sentinel’ upon the subject, almost every body understood the description of the requisite qualifications of a missionary to point directly to Mr. Wilson, although no personal mention of him was made.”

How kind in the good postmaster to let him

down so easily! But there is a divinity over all things, even politics, as this case most clearly proves; for thus we have a faithful letter carrier transferred by party exigencies to a field of the most prominent usefulness. We thank God for his overruling hand, not the partisan spirit that demanded the sacrifice.

The "Lawrence American," alluding to the above article in the "Sentinel," says: "We heartily and fully indorse these sentiments. We have known Mr. Wilson long, and somewhat intimately, and a more earnest, devoted, conscientious, true-hearted Christian we have never met."

In response to these suggestions a meeting of delegates from each religious society was called. Twenty-six delegates came together and unanimously resolved to form a city missionary society. A committee appointed to report a plan of organization brought in to a subsequent meeting the following report: "We are confirmed in the opinion so freely expressed at our last meeting, that the establishment of a city mission, free from sectarian bias, for the purpose of friendly counsel, encouragement, and material aid to the poor and friendless, is a



measure that promises results of a most beneficial character. . . . Your committee recommend the establishment of a city mission by the appointment of George P. Wilson as missionary, . . . also the formation of a board of advice, consisting of one delegate from each contributing religious society, and the president of the Provident Association." The nomination of Mr. Wilson was unanimously confirmed, no one else being presented or thought of for the new office. Mr. Wilson entered at once upon his duties. His first entry in his Diary reads as follows :

" *Wednesday, March 23, 1859.*—Am now fairly appointed to the responsible office of city missionary. I enter upon my duties feeling deeply my own weakness and insufficiency, with an earnest desire to do good, with a heartfelt sympathy for the poor for whom Jesus died, and with a humble reliance upon God for help, wisdom, and strength. I hope to accomplish some good."

During his first year's administration he was called, by an awful calamity, to the most arduous service. The 10th day of January, 1860, will never be forgotten in Lawrence. The traveler, passing from the city on the Boston and

Maine Railroad, will notice in great letters on the gable end of a brick structure this word—

“PEMBERTON.”

Few see that word, even after the lapse of a dozen years, without an involuntary shudder.

The old residents of Lawrence seldom refer to the event that took place upon that spot. The recollections are too harrowing to be long entertained. There, on the tenth day of January, without a moment's warning, fell a massive manufacturing edifice, burying in its ruins more than six hundred human beings. There, in the darkness of the night, a fatal spark ignited the chaotic mass of combustibles, and burned to a crisp scores of men, women, and children caught in the ruins. Words cannot photograph the horrors of that night. The wail that went up from Lawrence was like the wail of Egypt when the death angel passed over the land, and it was said in every house, “My first born is dead.” A granite shaft, reared by the city in her beautiful cemetery, covers the ashes of her citizens—the unrecognized victims of that dreadful calamity. We need not linger over the scene, except to say that Mr. Wilson was there and

every-where, an angel of mercy and relief. Fortunately, I am enabled to give documentary evidence of his manifold labors. In a history of the fall of the "Pemberton," published soon after the event, appears this reference to him :--

"A room at the City Hall was occupied by Mr. George P. Wilson, the City Missionary. It was made a depot for all the medicines, bandages, and articles of food and clothing which were sent in for the sufferers, and a rendezvous for those engaged in distributing them, and otherwise employed under his direction. The services of several assistants were required in the room, which was at times thronged by applicants for aid. The contributions of articles required to relieve those suffering from poverty or wounds were quite generous, and such necessary articles as were not contributed were supplied from the funds raised. The missionary himself was untiring in his labors. From morning till night he passed from house to house, personally inspecting the condition of the needy, and dispensing comfort to all. At the distribution room he was assisted by his wife, a young lady, and a young man, whose continual attention was required. All of the

contributions and the purchases brought were there arranged for distribution. All applicants, in the absence of the missionary, were referred to the ward committees, and no articles were delivered except upon their order. Hundreds have been aided by the missionary and his assistants, and much suffering prevented, and much trouble alleviated by these means."

When the news of the calamity spread through the land, large sums of money were raised and forwarded to Lawrence to relieve the families of the injured and dead. The city immediately appointed a responsible committee to distribute these funds. The report of that committee makes due acknowledgment of the services of Mr. Wilson :—

"On the devoted City Missionary, the usual channel of benevolent sympathy in our community, we knew we could always depend, but we thought it would be unwise to withdraw him from his other duties for this, as we felt that there was danger in this great and overwhelming calamity that other and ordinary objects of charitable assistance might be forgotten, and we meant to leave them to his care. Assisted by his excellent wife, he gave his days and

nights with unsurpassed devotion to the service of God and man, and through him many a dying bed was soothed and cheered by the gentle influence of a true and all-embracing Christian piety."

At the close of the year the new Society held its first anniversary. Commenting upon the report of the City Missionary, the "Lawrence American" says:—

"The Board of Advice were exceedingly fortunate in their selection of a person to carry out the responsible and peculiar work of a missionary to the poor and unfortunate. Mr. Wilson entered upon, and has prosecuted throughout, his labors with the earnestness and zeal of one whose whole soul was enlisted in this mission, and brought also the most fitting and effective qualifications for success. Those who have had occasion to receive his kind offices have met alike with sympathy, aid, and encouragement, and felt they had in him, however poor and unfortunate in their circumstances, a friend and helper in whom to confide."

The "Sentinel," referring to these friendly words of the "American," remarks:—

"Right again. A better man for the place

cannot be found. His judicious and warm-hearted administration of the peculiar and responsible duties of his trust has gained from his fellow-citizens the highest respect and commendation. Long may he be retained in the position which he so well fills !”

Such are some of the testimonies to his fidelity during the first year of his missionary life. It may not be amiss just here to consider the nature of his work. What did he do? How did he do it?

It is fitting that Mr. Wilson should answer these questions himself. Fortunately he has done so, and it is my task simply to arrange the matter he himself has written. If space permitted, his Diary, full of pathetic tales of suffering and of personal efforts to relieve destitution and reform the lost, should be inserted; but the history of those years of mission toil can better be told by reference to his annual reports. At every recurring anniversary of the mission a public meeting was held in the City Hall. No gatherings were more popular. The large hall was always crowded to its utmost capacity to hear the report of the missionary and speeches from prominent citizens. Mr. Wilson's reports

are excelled by none of a similar character. The style is clear, flowing, direct, the suggestions weighty and wise; the subject-matter methodically and naturally arranged, and pervaded with a frankness, honesty, and love for lost men, that make them irresistibly powerful. They are great in their simplicity—one of the best qualities of style. They show he was a practical, clear-headed business man as well as a philanthropist. I shall take up his work by departments, culling from all his reports without usually mentioning the year in which the thoughts are found.

“How we have Relieved Want.

“Ruskin says: ‘You know that to give alms is nothing, unless you give thought also; and therefore it is written, not “Blessed is he that *feedeth* the poor, but blessed is he that *considereth* the poor.”’ Your missionary was appointed, this mission established, to *consider* the poor, to find them out; to look closely into their circumstances; to give or to withhold charity, as it might be, in our judgment, for their best good. Our first work was to find out the impostors, exposing them to the public, warning our benevolent people against their wiles, and

in a few years we have been almost entirely relieved from street beggars.

“ It is always easier to give and receive blessings than to withhold, and just as surely receive, *curses*. But we soon became used to this, and, without fear, acted for the best good of those we were employed to *consider*. We entered into the homes of the poor, sought and won their confidence ; advised, encouraged, showed them how to help themselves when possible, and thus have never expended a great amount of money ; only, as a general rule, helping worthy individuals or families over hard places. . . . Many people ask, What is your mission ? How is the money received from the Churches expended ? We answer, The donations for the Relief Fund are deposited in the bank. When we relieve want we do not usually give money, but orders upon the grocer, wood dealer, etc., thus making sure that they receive the article they need, and avoiding temptation to spend the money for something else, and at the end of every quarter these orders are presented, with the bills as vouchers, and all accounts settled. Two hours of each day are spent at the office, where we receive those who come for



relief. In the afternoon we visit the homes of these applicants, to see if their stories are true. We go among those who have no minister, who belong to no religious society, for whom no one has a special care. Many families are liable to fall into distress when they first come into the city; they are strangers, to whom shall they look for sympathy? Who shall minister to their wants and attend the funerals of such families? *This is our work.* It is by no means a light labor to do this kind of work in a city like ours, where there are so many kinds of people, so much intemperance, so much poverty and misery, and so many to please.

“Mission life at the house and office is often very perplexing and discouraging. We go home from our office for dinner and rest, and are frequently met by persons who are waiting about the door, and before we can finish dinner the bell calls us twice or thrice to answer some one who has failed to meet us at the office, and must be attended to immediately.

“Some one asks, What do all the people want? Here are a few of their wants: One wants the city doctor, a very frequent request; one brings a recipe for medicine for which they

are unable to pay, and we become their indorser ; some barefooted boy or girl, aye, whole families of them, want shoes and stockings ; some traveler wants a place to stay over night ; many hungry ones come to be fed, and are not turned away unfilled ; very many come for employment ; a baby is left upon a doorstep, some one comes to me to provide for it ; another comes for recommendation to get into the hospital ; others to get out of the city, and are unable to walk ; some want letters written ; some wish to sign the temperance pledge ; some come for us to visit the sick and dying ; some want advice and counsel ; some come to be married and some to be baptized ; some call us to bury the dead. Here comes a strong man, with a red face, and breath redolent with beer ; he insists upon having money to buy a ticket for Haverhill. We tell him he is perfectly able to walk ; he goes away very angry. Curses are plentiful, and plentifully bestowed when aid is withheld. To-day there comes a woman with three small children clinging to her. Her story is also a frequent one ; her husband has deserted her, and she is left destitute, without clothes and food. Our mission-

room is searched to find cast-off garments to cover them. This is a very important part of our work. Our clothing establishment, if not as large and elegant as many on Essex-street, is very largely patronized, and makes many a mother glad and happy in seeing the nakedness of her children covered. Over in yonder street is a young couple only a few months here, the mother sick with fever, the father the only nurse. Very excellent people they are, and it is our privilege to supply their most pressing wants, and to interest Christian friends in them, who bring sympathy and every needed aid.

“Over in a distant part of the city is a family of new-comers, who are well off when all can work. Typhoid fever makes its appearance; one after another is laid on a sick-bed. Now is their time of need; this is their hard place over which we are enabled, with your aid, to help them. Seeking for employment for the destitute is a very important part of our work; visiting among the poor during sickness occupies much of our time, and affords us many opportunities for doing good both to body and soul, and we often go away from such scenes

richer in our own experience, and thankful for the blessed privilege of going about to do good.

“Religious Work.

“We have acted upon the same principles that have guided us from the first, namely, to distribute alms in a Christian manner, to give food and clothes where needed, before tracts and sermons, yet to keep constantly in mind that the religion of Jesus Christ is the one great need of rich and poor alike. More than usual attention has been paid this year, or during the summer months, to visiting the Protestant poor, and especially the families of strangers, where there was sickness, and it has been one of the pleasantest features of the mission work that we have in many cases been able to minister to the spiritual necessities of those who had all bodily comforts needed, but who had no home, no pastor, no religious friend. Some such during the past year it has been my happy privilege to lead to the Friend that sticketh closer than a brother. Very gratefully have such ministrations been received; many have been directed to the church and Sabbath-school.

“My Sabbaths have been very fatiguing, but blessed, happy days. I usually leave my house at half past eight in the morning, have preaching service at the jail at nine, and then a Sabbath-school for half or three quarters of an hour, in which I usually have a class, and close with general exercises and blackboard lessons, and then, if not elsewhere engaged, spend an hour with the prisoners in conversation, distributing tracts, etc. This takes usually three hours. Then, before going home, I frequently visit a Sabbath-school, and, in the afternoon and evening, nearly always am engaged in religious meetings, frequently attending funerals on Sunday, so that I have many times had constant and wearying labor from half past eight in the morning until nine at night; and this has been the programme for ten years. There is no part of the work we enjoy so much, inasmuch as the most of it is not official, or required of us by the board, but voluntary, loving labor for the souls of men.”

And the amount of work thus performed by Mr. Wilson on the Sabbath is almost incredible. His preaching at all seemed to be purely providential. Soon after his appoint-

ment as missionary, he attended the religious services at the jail, and distributed tracts among the prisoners. The chaplain, an aged man, was in very poor health, and often requested him to assist in the devotional exercises. In the latter part of 1859 the chaplain was taken ill, and Mr. Wilson was called upon to officiate in his stead. His Diary says :—

“*Sunday, October 30, 1859.*— . . . I conducted the whole of the services at the jail for the first time. I hardly dared to attempt to preach. I spoke for forty minutes from John iii, 14, 15. God helped me and I was not confounded. I hope good was done.”

At this time he held an exhorter's license, and such was his acceptability when he attempted to preach that, in April, 1860, he received a local preacher's license, and was bidden God speed in his good work.

It is no light testimony to the man to say that no one was more acceptable to the pulpits of all denominations in Lawrence than Mr. Wilson. Almost every Sabbath he had calls from some society for a discourse. Running over his Diary at random, I find the statement against almost every Sabbath of from one to

four sermons, in addition to funerals, and addresses to Sunday-schools, and temperance lectures—an amount of work simply wonderful. He seemed literally to fly from church to church, greeted every-where with loving glances and hearty graspings of the hand from young and old, preaching, talking, in his own genial, hearty way, and stimulating every body by his presence to a better life. The advent of Mr. Wilson in a church was a signal for a general buzz of gladness. O how the good people of Lawrence loved him! But we continue his description of his work:—

“House of Correction and Jail.

“The Gospel and Christian labor should, like the sun, shine upon rich and poor, vile and pure, alike.

“To do good to the infamous is to follow the steps of Him of whom it was said, ‘This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them.’ From the commencement of the mission work we have been interested in the prisoners, following them from their homes to the prison when there was another chaplain, carrying tracts, papers, friendly counsel and encouragement as best we

could, until we were appointed, nine years ago, chaplain. This must, of course, be mostly like seed sown in stony ground and by the wayside. But they are the 'forgotten ones,' sometimes

'Without ever a word of pity,  
Or a touch of a kindly hand.'

O how much they need the comforts of His blessed religion! We have not ceased tenderly to remonstrate, entreat, advise, and instruct them, in public and private; and here and there we find one who leads a new life after his or her release."

These words introduce us to a subject that occupied Mr. Wilson's attention and enlisted his sympathies more than any other feature of his work. I refer to the treatment of criminals. The problem of criminality, its origin and prevention, is one of the most interesting and important among our social questions. Many noble minds are now grappling with it, and inculcating wiser methods in the treatment of the criminal classes than we have hitherto pursued. Mr. Wilson's philanthropic nature was early interested in the study of these subjects. He examined the question both theoretically and practically. It



was his custom to procure the best of treatises on criminal treatment, and study them in the light of his own experience; he attended conventions where such subjects were discussed, sought information from the best and most experienced minds, and tested for himself the value of every suggestion.

Such was his practical wisdom that he became quite skillful in handling these intricate questions. He made a reputation among some of the best thinkers on such matters. Had he given himself scientifically to the subject, he might have won enduring fame and gained a national notoriety. The power was in him, but it was spent in other lines of usefulness.

It may not be amiss to sum up some of his views on these points as given in his reports. These, of course, have a local application, and may not be stated as broadly as if he were generalizing principles for society at large, and yet the local statement involves the more general application.

"We still warmly and earnestly protest against the false principle of confining young boys with adult criminals; we sometimes have over twenty boys in our jail. *It is all wrong.* All parties

who examine this matter condemn it. The officers of the prison and each annual visiting committee condemn it. How shall it be stopped? If no other way the Legislature should forbid it, and compel each city and town to provide a school for their own boys, if no better way can be devised. We again call the attention of our citizens to the manner of raising up hardened criminals to prey upon society in the future. Why may not our new small-pox hospital, which never has been used, and perhaps may never be needed for the purpose for which it was built, be devoted to a Lawrence Reform School for Boys? It would be a saving for our city in the end, I sincerely believe, and we should be discharging our duty to these poor wretched children who have no one to control them, and from whom our future drunkards and criminals are to be made."

"There is practically much unbelief in the minds of many in regard to the reformation and conversion of criminals. Prison discipline and accommodations are wonderfully improved since the days of Howard, yet human nature is still the same. The Christian heart must be stirred, as was Mrs. Fry's, 'by a sympathy

toward those who, by yielding themselves to the bondage of sin, have become victims of human justice.' The law must be vindicated, and the penalty meted out ; yet justice can be mingled with mercy. The prisoner must be recognized as a man, and his higher nature appealed to ; the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ presented to him as his *only* safety."

"What shall be Done with our Bad Boys ?

"It is the custom of our courts to send boys who are convicted of truancy, vagrancy, petty larceny, and for some graver offenses, to the county jail and House of Correction. During the past year there have been in the Lawrence jail fifty-four boys from the ages of six to seventeen, and nineteen under twelve years of age, confined in the same cells, working in the same workshops with adult criminals. This class of boys, who are to make the criminal classes of our city in the future, are alarmingly on the increase. With our present treatment we are paying a premium to juvenile criminals, and sowing seed that shall yield us a bitter harvest in future years. A short sentence at the county jail has no reformatory influence

over them. We owe it to our children, who are to form the future population of our city, that these boys of vicious proclivities be restrained and reformed—that some judicious, continued reformatory discipline be applied to them. But very few can be sent to the State Reform School at Westborough, for it is impossible to send all the unruly boys of the Commonwealth to one institution. It would cause an immense establishment, so large as to defeat the end sought. The school at Westborough is too large now, and only that part that is managed upon the home system outside of the main building is at all satisfactory in its results. There is a plan that has been successfully tried for several years in Lowell that could be adopted here with comparatively little expense, namely, a reform school connected with the City Alms-house and Farm, and yet distinct from it as far as association of the inmates is concerned; a school where all this class of boys could be sent for a long term, where they could be taught to work, and trained to be a blessing instead of a curse to the community. There is also another plan, involving more expense, but far better in my judgment

for the end desired, and that is a 'Home,' consisting of suitable buildings, workshop, farm, or garden, to be under the charge of a kind-hearted Christian man or woman, where the children of misfortune, neglect, or crime, who have been from their earliest infancy exposed to every thing evil and contaminating, shall be warmed by love, and led to lives of usefulness and honor. This is practicable only by liberal donations from wealthy citizens. Is it not our duty to institute some such scheme to prevent crime, to control the education of those who are uncontrolled, and at present unmanageable?"

These suggestions are of permanent value, inasmuch as they are so universally disregarded. Society must take advance steps in her treatment of youthful rogues and incipient criminals before we can materially reduce the criminal classes. The most liberal provision is the cheapest. Economy in this direction is simply short-sightedness. Mr. Wilson's earnest protests against our usual policy of making no discrimination among criminals on account of age should find a hearty response in every breast. The problem of criminality in a high state of civilization has but one possible solu-

tion, namely, a wisely regulated home in every community for waifs and youthful violators of law. Every child should have from some source a healthful discipline, and if its natural protectors fail to give it, society, at any cost, should appoint a competent substitute. Such a policy pays in the end, even in the matter of dollars and cents.

“Evening School.

“It has been one of the greatest pleasures of our life to be connected with this institution for the eleven years of its history. While it has not accomplished all we had hoped, perhaps all it ought to have done, yet we know it has been instrumental in forming habits of study in the minds of hundreds of our young working people, and it has been the means of advancing to positions of usefulness and trust very many who, had it not been for some such opportunity, would never have thought of rising to higher positions. Not long since, while hunting for a sick woman in one of our crowded streets, I met a matronly-looking lady who had two small children. She seemed surprised that I did not know her. She said she was formerly

a member of the evening school, and 'I want to thank you for the privilege of the night school, for there I received all the education I ever had.' I have several hundred letters written by the scholars to me during the eleven years of the school, and many of them are filled with expressions of gratitude for the privilege of attending the 'night school.'"

"Sewing School.

"For nearly thirteen years this humble instrumentality has kept on, in its quiet way, bringing forth fruit of hope and blessing. We frequently meet with young women, sometimes with married ladies, who say, 'I learned to sew in your "Mission Sewing-School."' The name calls up to our mind a pleasant picture of from forty to fifty little girls, with bright, happy faces, who love to come every week to meet their kind teachers, and learn that which will be a blessing to them all through life. While sewing, the time is pleasantly enlivened with songs and delightful stories, teaching lessons of morality, gentleness, and truthfulness, thus helping these dear young girls to form habits that shall make them comely, and useful in the social and home duties of after life."

It has been remarked by a recent writer "that a philanthropist is a weak man;" assuming in this statement that strong love is never associated with a clear, judicious intellect. No doubt there is ground for such an assertion. Great benevolence of feeling is frequently marked by little wisdom in the treatment of its objects of compassion. Some parents are so tender-hearted and loving that they ruin their children through lenity and indulgence. There are multitudes of goodish people who manifest, under the name of Christianity, a species of compassion for criminals, and a desire to shield them from justice, which, if yielded to, would inevitably lead to social disorganization. There is such a thing as mercy which is unmerciful. Mr. Wilson was not a man of this character. He was great-hearted, unselfish, enthusiastic, but he was not weak. He was as wise as he was pitiful. He had no maudlin, unhealthy sympathy in his soul. His sense of justice was as strong as his feeling of compassion. Hence he was prudent in the treatment of applicants for charity. Though as tender-hearted as a child, yet his mind was not warped by his feelings. He detected imposition with a glance



of intuition. He seemed to read men's souls by a kind of inspiration. Impostors dreaded him. They could seldom outwit his incisive questions into their manufactured tales of woe. It may not be amiss to give to the public some of his sentiments on street-begging, and the ends to be sought in bestowing charities :—

“Vagrancy.

“Indiscriminate charity is a great evil. Better not give at all than give to all who ask, without investigation. While we have ever had an honest desire to care for and help all honest poor, we have sought from the first to prevent and discourage vagrancy and street-begging so far as we were able. It is the duty of a Christian people to inquire how best to relieve the destitute, keeping in view the *prevention* as well as the *relief* of poverty. There can be no objection to benevolent families selecting objects that they know will make good use of their benefactions, and supplying them with food, clothing, etc. But to do so to strangers who come to your door, is in nine cases out of ten paying a premium to thieves and vagrants. It is necessary sometimes to be cruel in order to

be kind. Persons not thrown upon their own resources, are apt, when *able* to take care of themselves, to become vagrants and pests ; whereas, if left to help themselves, they would, by putting forth the energy necessary, acquire habits of industry far more valuable than the alms they receive."

Such are not the words of weak sentimentality, but of sound wisdom. The highest type of benevolence is not that which simply relieves destitution, but that which builds up a manly character. Both are benevolent, but to help a man take care of himself is the greatest charity.

## CHAPTER VI.

## MISSION WORK IN LAWRENCE—CONTINUED.

## “A Growing Evil.

“**T**HAT community which exercises the most healthful control over its young people, and educates them best in moral and religious ideas as well as in letters, is the most perfect model of state or city.

“No one who carefully observes can help seeing the growing recklessness of many of our young people; the want of politeness, and the positive rudeness, obscenity, and profanity, exhibited upon our public streets. The habit of profanity on the Sabbath is fearfully common among men and women, and even boys and girls. I am not a croaker. I do not belong to, or sympathize with, the race at all. Yet it is my province and duty, as one of the conservators of the public morals, to declare the truth at proper times, however uncomplimentary to us the truth may be. Who are these young people who thus belittle and disgrace them-

selves, and stain the good reputation of our city? Can we see no connection between this growing scandal and the multiplying of beer saloons on our streets? These institutions have *never* proved great conservators of public morals. The lessons learned in them are not to be repeated before refined and delicate ears. Yet the fact stands clear, that hundreds of our young people are learning in these 'devil's schools' lessons that are already bringing forth their baleful fruits to curse the land. Woe unto us if we do not, as we may have opportunity, *destroy* these schools of vice, and gain these young hearts for temperance, virtue, and religion!"

These sentiments, from one of Mr. Wilson's Reports, give us a fitting introduction to his efforts in behalf of temperance. This great cause enlisted his warmest sympathies, and was one of the heaviest burdens he carried upon his heart.

"Band of Hope and Temperance.

*"Strong drink! how many fine intellects hast thou ruined? how many strong men hast thou made weak? how many orphans and widows have to accuse thee of all their woe? how many*

*of thy victims hast thou doomed to the cold, dark grave?* My heart is pained beyond expression at the prevalence of intemperance and temptation to drink in our city. Ask the drunkard if the evils of intemperance can be overestimated, and the answer is, 'The half cannot be told.' An intelligent mechanic came to my house not long since to sign the temperance pledge. His story is similar to hundreds of others. He was a good workman; could have excellent wages, and support his family comfortably. But, alas! that family had been robbed; the children shamefully defrauded; that wife made so miserable that she said, with terrible earnestness, 'Mr. Wilson, when my husband is sober our little home seems like heaven, but when he is drunk it is like hell.' I frequently hear these strong sentences from those whose souls have been pierced with the unutterable woes of a drunkard's home.

"The best theory of reform is that which *pre-empt*s the soil of the heart of the child, sows good seed, and nurtures the growth of right principles, thus preventing the formation of habits that shall lead to drunkenness and crime. *This* we are doing in the Band of Hope, where

children, with the consent of their parents, take the following

“PLEDGE.—I solemnly promise to abstain from the use of all intoxicating liquors as a drink, from the use of tobacco in every form, and from all profanity. I will be true to my country's flag, true to my word, and will try to do right.’

“I am every year more and more convinced of the importance of specific, definite teaching of these great moral truths. This little pledge carries with it, as it is repeated every week, lessons of the utmost importance to these young people. We still keep *tobacco* in our pledge, because we believe the use of it to be decidedly injurious to our boys. We have the approval of the parents; for whatever may be their habits, they desire their children to be free, not only from strong drink, but from tobacco also. These lessons are taught with songs, recitations, addresses, etc. We look upon this work with intense satisfaction, as promising good fruit.”

Such were Mr. Wilson's views on “moral suasion.”

This little Band of Hope was a voluntary

gathering of the children of the city every Saturday afternoon in a large room in the City Hall, granted for the purpose. The exercises, as before stated, consisted in repeating the pledge in concert, speaking pieces, singing inspiring temperance melodies, and listening to remarks from Mr. Wilson and others. It shows his great power over children, that for years he was enabled to gather hundreds of them in such a place in the joyful play-hours allotted to them. These labors were extremely taxing, and yet they were voluntarily taken upon himself that he might save the youth from the drunkard's doom. Mr. Wilson delighted in the pledge and moral suasion, but he was too broad a man to stop at that point. He was a pronounced prohibitionist, a radical among radicals. Let him speak for himself:—

. . . "I cannot speak differently ; my convictions and impressions of twelve years' growth among the poor and wretched must have utterance. It has been my most earnest endeavor and constant habit to try and save the drunkard and shield the young. I have induced many hundreds to sign a total abstinence pledge. But O how my heart aches to see (and worse

than all powerless to prevent\*) the temptation to which these poor reformed men and women are exposed ; temptation, alas ! that the most of them are unable to resist. Especially is this true of those who sign the pledge at the jail, or immediately after leaving. They sign, many of them, without any mental reservation ; having felt the ' woe,' they would fain escape the final ' bite,' and ' sting.' They really desire for their own sake, and for the poor suffering wife and children, to be temperate ; and could they, when liberated, be placed in a community like Vineland, N. J., where no intoxicating drinks could be had, very many of them would be sober men, would support their families, and be useful members of society. Thank God ! some do this and are happy ; but, alas ! nine tenths of them get drunk again, wickedly tempted by one hundred and fifty grog-shops which are licensed, even here in Lawrence, to do just this work of destruction. We believe in moral suasion for the drunkard. For many years we have, almost daily, labored with him and the moderate drinker, and more especially and hopefully with

\* The prohibitory law of Massachusetts had at that time been repealed, and a license law substituted.



the dear children; and we mean, with God's help, to 'fight it out on that line' so long as we live. But we also believe, just as strongly, in the right of society to protect itself against all enemies, and especially this, her greatest one. We believe we have the right, as citizens interested in the welfare of this city, to say that one hundred and fifty men shall not be withdrawn from honest business, and be allowed by statute law to maintain establishments which tend only to the ruin of individuals and families."

It was not in the nature of Mr. Wilson to hold such convictions in silence. He gave them utterance with the power of an ancient prophet. For years he was Secretary of the Lawrence Temperance Alliance—an open organization, embracing among its members some of the most influential citizens. The heaviest burdens of the Society fell upon its energetic secretary. He was the originator of its meetings, the inspiring mind that kept it awake to the issues of the hour. Probably no city in Massachusetts held more temperance meetings, or was more vigorously addressed during these years, than the city of Lawrence.

Mr. Wilson was a lion on this question. I have listened to his thrilling appeals—his great heart bleeding with the sorrows of others, his voice, now tremulous with emotion, now terrible in its thunderings against the crimes of the tempted or the weak—until my whole being was aflame with admiration at the moral nobility of the man, and the overwhelming pathos of his artless, but heroic utterances.

It is sometimes said of the dead, as an intended compliment, "He had no enemies." I am glad I cannot make such a statement of George P. Wilson. Such a remark is equivalent to a moral accusation. It proves either that the man was a negative nature, or an open compromiser with sin. He was neither. He was a man of positive convictions, and an outspoken opponent of wrong. He had no selfish designs in his advocacy of moral reforms; he sought no official rewards. He loved men, hated sin, desired human happiness, and instinctively arrayed himself against every thing that injured society.

Coming as he did in daily contact with the horrors of intemperance, saluted on every hand with the hopeless wail of its victims, he learned

to regard the liquor traffic with inexpressible loathing. Its sorrows penetrated his inmost soul. He heard the plaintive pleadings of every drunkard's home calling to him for help. He was too noble to steel his heart against the outcry, too good to bid his better nature be still, while he replied to the summons like too many selfish Cains, "Am I my brother's keeper?" He was too manly to take any equivocal position. He therefore came forth, a self-appointed advocate, in behalf of wretched families. He championed with all his heart the cause of the tempted against the tempter. He chose to fight with no other weapon than *truth*; but there is no other sharper, or more dreaded by the base. At times he wielded that weapon like a master, laying bare to the soul its selfishness, lust, and sin. He would stand before those Lawrence audiences, his heart on fire with sympathy for the helpless victims of the liquor traffic, and arraign the rumseller and his selfish coadjutors before the dread tribunal of their own consciences with a majesty that approximated to the "woe unto you" of his blessed Master. No man can do that and lack enemies. The merciful and immaculate Son

of God could not. Goodness, even to the point of perfection, will not shield a man from cruel malice who thus opposes the plans of the bad, and becomes an obstacle to the accomplishment of their selfish purposes. Such men strike back, but never in the manly way of honest argument. They hit the object of their hate as the assassin does, in the dark and from behind. Mr. Wilson knew what it was to feel the cold steel thrust into his sensitive heart by an unknown hand. The cowards took good care to conceal their names. Their articles in the public prints insinuating fraud, intemperate zeal, ministerial defilement, etc., were always anonymous. I have listened myself, in silence, to the most slanderous insinuations against him, when my whole nature rose up in wrathful protest. I knew too well its origin, baffled hopes, disappointed expectations, and a quivering conscience.

This personal antagonism could not be attributed to any harshness or injudicious denunciations on his part. Such conduct was foreign to his whole nature. He was the soul of gentleness and love. He took no delight in wounding even an enemy. His utterances of truth,

that woke the passions of guilty men, were but the outcry of affection, wounded at the sight of the weak, struggling to get free from the meshes of appetite, but unable because of the selfishness of the tempter. His exposures of their conduct were but the thrilling appeals of a tortured soul to their dead consciences, that he might awaken them from their moral paralysis, and thus lead them to desist, through their own sense of blood-guiltiness, from their infamous crimes against society. In doing this he combined, in an unusual degree, great fidelity of speech with great tenderness of feeling; qualities which should always complement and modify each other in every teacher of morals.

All hail such manhood as his! It is blessed with heaven's benedictions. The closing benediction is surely verified in his experience: "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." He was wiser than many in that he avoided the anathema of Jesus;

“Woe unto you when all men speak well of you.”

But what does all this prove? The noble spirit of the man. We have had from Mr. Wilson's lips and pen many expressions of devotion to the good of others, many testimonies of his desire to live to make men better and happy. His works prove that these sentiments were not cheap talk, baseless fancies, the sentimentalisms of the novelist and day-dreamer. No man will do as he did without some genuine principle of self-sacrifice impelling him on. It was love for men born of God that inspired him to such devotion to his convictions of right.

The indifferent and selfish pronounced him excited, intemperate in his strong advocacy of temperance principles, but it was that species of fanaticism that genuine Christianity never fails to produce. His was the heart-experience of Rev. Dr. Arnot, who, having been charged with “excitement” on this subject, broke forth in these words: “People need not tell me that I am excited on these questions; I know that I am. I should be ashamed before God and man if I were not, There is more in the public

houses of Glasgow to stir the spirit of a minister than all that Paul saw at Athens. In my ministry I meet the horrid fruits of these whisky-shops ; I see men and women perishing in these pitfalls. The number of the victims is so great that it overwhelms me. My brain is burning, my heart is breaking. The Church is asleep, and the world too, and they are hugging each other. I am weary with holding in. I must cry. I would rather be counted singular in the judgment of men than be unfaithful in the judgment of God."

Such men as these are the imperative demand of the times. The liquor traffic will never be subdued by foiled weapons and half-hearted opposition. It was the obstinate fighting of the "Wilderness" that broke the back of the rebellion, not the kid-glove parades of the years previous. Slavery died only in the spasms of a life-and-death struggle, and so only can we conquer the greater evil of rumselling. When society wakes up from its slothfulness and indifference and passes through the heart-experiences of Mr. Wilson and Dr. Arnot, then, and not till that hour, can we hope for that rigor of soul that will meet and overcome the combined

hosts of hell, that stand marshaled behind the liquor trade of the Republic. It is a burning shame that our Christianity gives us so few such men. Every Christian should feel these heart-throbbings. May the hour hasten when Christian society shall fight this monstrosity of wickedness with the same pertinacity of purpose with which Grant moved across the Rapidan to attack Lee! When that hour comes the end is not far off. The struggle may be desperate, but it will be brief.

One would think we had already revealed enough work for one man. But we are not yet done. Mr. Wilson was the servant of all. Other departments of labor received a share of his attention. Not the least taxing was that which the war threw upon him.

During these years of bloody strife his heart and hands were enlisted in the welfare of the soldiers. Lawrence sent to the field during the rebellion from six to seven hundred men. One of her citizens was the first man who fell in the war. The first regiment in the field had in its ranks a company from this city. When they reached Washington, so hasty had been their departure they lacked some of the com-



monest necessities of life. Mr. Wilson was the medium of supply. Books, clothing, delicacies for the sick and wounded, passed through his hands to the field. He can best tell us some of his labors during these years :—

“I have had opportunity to know, by personal examination in their tents and barracks, witnessing their daily life, something of the sacrifice made of home, friends, society, business, every thing ; to know of the fierce temptations to which they were exposed, and all this for us and our children, for a holy, righteous cause. I know the joy they have felt in sending remittances to their families, for twice have I received it from their hands. I know the joy experienced by the mothers and wives in receiving the remittance, for it has been my delightful privilege to distribute upward of thirteen thousand dollars among the families of our soldiers. It has not been my privilege to participate in the active duties of the soldier on the battle-field ; but at home, and sometimes in the camp, to minister to the necessities of the brave ones who have represented us ; to care in some degree for the sick, wounded, and bereaved ; to look after the widows and orphans ;

to visit, encourage, and relieve, if necessary, the wounded or dying in the distant hospital; to carry to them and receive from them their messages; caring for the soldiers' money, and expending it for their families—these have been some of our duties in connection with the army."

These experiences, voluntarily taken upon himself, involved no little care and perplexing toil. Again and again he visited the army, carrying messages and supplies, delivering them in person to their various destinations, receiving in return letters, packages, large sums of money, all of which were sacredly delivered to friends at home, or, as often happened in the latter case, deposited in the bank for safe keeping. The pay-rolls now in the possession of his family show the vast amount of labor that must have been expended in settling these accounts. Yet it was cheerfully done, with no other reward than the gratitude of the parties and the "well done" of his own heart. The item of correspondence was a severe tax upon his time and strength.

Many made him their scribe, others brought letters to be read to them, while many soldiers

appointed him their counselor, clerk, and general agent. If any one wanted a friend to assist them, Mr. Wilson was the one chosen. It is a fitting conclusion to these statements concerning his work among the soldiers, to remark that his services were most gratefully appreciated, as scores of letters from them, unfortunately lost, testified to their love, gratitude, and high regard for his counsel and assistance.

As the years rolled on, Mr. Wilson became more and more interested in the general work of the Sabbath-school. His contact with childhood in the Band of Hope, and sewing and evening schools, deepened his interest in the work among the young. Child-life charmed him and in turn he charmed it. It is safe to say that few men have gained such power over children as he possessed. Whether in public speech or private conversation, it mattered not; he held them entranced by his artlessness and peculiar magnetism. The spell that bound them to him was more than childish curiosity; it was faith, a certain indefinable instinct that they could trust him fully. Hence they clung to him with somewhat of filial pride. Oftentimes, as he passed through the streets of Law-

rence, flocks of children would surround him, some running on before to herald his coming, and gather an escort worthy of the occasion. These were peaceful ovations, but they were such as kings might truly covet. This aptitude in interesting children was duly appreciated by the public. Calls multiplied from every quarter for his services. During the latter years of his work in Lawrence he was overburdened with pressing invitations and appeals for addresses at conventions, concerts, and camp-meetings. On these occasions he not only delighted the little folks with his pathos and lively presentation of spiritual things, but he never failed to charm the most cultivated with his simple and pleasing manners and effective speech.

For thirteen years the work I have outlined was carried on his heart. As it grew and expanded around him, he grew and expanded in character and devotion to it. It is not strange that such a man should be highly valued beyond the limits of his own city. It is not strange that his services should be coveted. The successful workers in any field are few compared with the demand. Candidates for every position abound, but tried workmen are scarce. The

loudest clamor of the age is for first-class men. Novices are at a discount, skilled laborers at a premium. Mr. Wilson was a skilled laborer in the field of benevolent activities, and hence Lawrence was speedily in competition with other cities for his services. Boston was first on the list. Earnest appeals were made to him to engage in the evangelization of the masses in the commercial center of New England. But the apple was not yet ripe. The hour had not come for such ministry, and he declined. Lynn was the next competitor. Some of her public-spirited capitalists and citizens were not slow to perceive and covet his peculiar gifts and experience, and they sought to secure them for their own city. Financial inducements were offered him, and every appeal made calculated to affect favorably his decision; but the good people of Lawrence clung to him so tenaciously, and opposed his departure so mightily with the memories of their generosity and love, that he yielded to their protestations, and decided to remain in the familiar scenes where he stood loved and honored as nowhere else.

But no sooner had this decision been made than a new appeal came from the Church, a

summons startling and irresistible. It came like the call of God.

Before entering upon this subject, however, it may not be amiss to turn aside from the path of events and contemplate his home-life, and the deeper and more private experiences of his heart. We long to know the hidings of his power, the secret forces that underlie and animate the labors we have been depicting.

## CHAPTER VII.

## HOME-LIFE.

IN the concluding prayer offered at the funeral services by Rev. C. E. Fisher, among other subjects for thanksgiving in the life of Mr. Wilson he mentioned one especially to which no reference has hitherto been made in these pages ; he thanked God for *the model home*.

It is sometimes the case with busy men, whose lives are devoted to public interests, that in the multiplicity of their public cares the home-life languishes. They live so much for society that they forget their own. This accusation has especially been brought against mothers who have entered heartily into reformatory movements, and constitutes one of the most powerful objections against women's entering the arena of public life. The great movements of society must not be slighted, they need advocates and self-denying laborers ; but when such associations are built up at the

expense of home-duties, they become of doubtful value. It may be safely said that this result is not necessary, especially while these public efforts are carried on chiefly by men. The home-life of Mr. Wilson proves it. Few persons were more absorbed in social interests than he, and yet in the midst of all these perplexing and pressing duties he was the head of a home that had few superiors. We will not give him all the glory. There stood one by his side, every whit his peer, who must receive her full share of our approbation, and yet it is no disparagement to her to say, that his presence was essential to fashion such a sanctuary.

As previously stated, Mr. Wilson was married April 27, 1853, to Miss Emily O. Fisk. He had purchased a small, but pleasant, cottage on Garden-street, furnished it neatly but plainly, and thither he brought his bride and made a dwelling-place. They were congenial spirits. He had reason to value her intellect and heart. He did both with all the strength of his loving nature.

Birthdays were sacredly observed in the family. On one of these he writes:—



"TO MY WIFE EMILY.

"Thy joy, my joy,  
Thy sorrow, mine;  
Thy need, my need,  
My plenty, thine.

"G. P. W."

It is needless to say that the atmosphere of their home was the immediate product of their mutual love and devotion. Home without this union of hearts is a place where people stay, not where they live. But what gave them this union? A heavenly aspiration, a common bond of love for a common Saviour. The reason why so many marriages are not congenial is because the parties lack a centralizing and unifying affection—a love worthy of them, as creatures of Almighty God. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" is an apostolic injunction as rational as any of Heaven's immutable principles. How can there be concord without unity of purpose and affection? There is no solution to the great problem of married misery but in the divine law of love to God. All other remedies are powerless to remove the root of bitterness. Heaven forbid that we should rest satisfied with superficial theories, when we ought to be content with nothing less than

the radicalism of Jesus: "Ye must be born again!"

To my mind, the most striking feature in Mr. Wilson's home was *restfulness*. I never entered it without feeling the blessed influence of its sweet repose. That quality was induced therein by the parental spirit. It was the restful faith of these twin Christian hearts that threw that indefinable spell over the home-circle. It was not the quiet of leisure. Hearts and hands were never more busy than theirs. The door-bell never rusted for want of calls for business. It was simply a precious soul-rest in the midst of the most bustling activity; the placidity of Jesus on the raging sea of Galilee, or along the dusty highways of Judea, as he was thronged with the multitudes, wearying him with their ceaseless cry for help.

God gave them three children — George, Frank, and Annie. There is no higher test of character than the culture of children, especially those of our own blood. Love may ruin as well as save. Affection not unfrequently disturbs the action of the understanding. It requires wisdom to manage ourselves, as well as to manage our children. And may we not

truly say the highest test of wisdom is the management of ourselves — “He that ruleth himself is better than he that taketh a city.” He who cannot rule himself cannot rule others.

Mr. Wilson did not forget the importance of home culture. He made ample provision for it. While his family expenditures were rigidly economical, there was one exception: he never hesitated to lavish money for the minds and hearts of his children.

Every provision was made to make home pleasant and attractive. Pictures, toys, illuminated texts and mottoes, pictorial papers of an elevating and religious tone, literature of all varieties, musical instruments, abounded in it. Was he not wise in all this? The want of the age is not so much money, as the art of spending it. How many homes are destitute of valuable literature and papers suited to fashion the heart of childhood, while its grown-up inhabitants are squandering their resources in making a display of showy garments and mental insipidity along the sidewalks. This is sad economy.

The religious order of the household was

beautiful. The family worship was the culminating period of joy. Every guest will testify to the truthfulness of this remark. This was made so by the perfect system attending it. Mr. Wilson was ardently attached to the Berean Sunday-school series, now enlarged into the International. He carried it into the family worship. All committed the topic for the following Sabbath—the Golden Text, the Outline—observed the daily readings, and faithfully studied the lesson. It was his custom to question the children on its principles, and faithfully enforce its precepts. Every Sabbath evening the commandments were repeated, and, if time permitted, other exercises of a like nature were enjoyed. His prayers were the genial outpourings of a trustful heart, seeking blessings on every member of the circle, often by name, yet in such a devotional and appropriate way as not to give offense to a sensitive nature.

The religious impressions of such hours as these must be lasting. No child can grow up in such an atmosphere without having the deepest feelings of the heart stirred. Such occasions are the anchorage grounds of the soul's faith. How many in after life are saved

from drifting on the rocks of vice and skepticism by the invisible influences that link such hours with the heart-life !

And yet all this implies something else. This system cannot be carried out without parental authority—a lawless family will never submit to it. Furthermore, that discipline must be of a peculiar kind. It must not be arbitrary and puritanic. The iron links of law, in themselves rough and irritating, must be encased in such manifested tenderness and love as to make them soft and smooth. This can only be effected by commencing with the babe, and holding it firmly in the grasp of gentle but unyielding authority through all its earlier childhood.

Mr. Wilson had no sympathy with home lawlessness. His tones were genial, but firm ; and his discipline exact, though not excessive. He began it early, so that the appearance of authority might be dispensed with by the substitution of fixed habit. Filial trust soon made obedience easy. Then sprang up mutual confidence and a genial companionship, that made home the dearest spot on earth.

Owing to the nature of his employment he

was not often absent from his family. From this fact few letters were exchanged among its members. One or two will serve our purpose as well as a multitude, for a father's soul may be disclosed in a few lines as easily as in many.

Writing to George in 1861, who was visiting his relatives, he throws in these words at the close : " Study hard, play hard, work hard, eat hard, and obey grandmother." Laconic advice, but as wise as it is intense.

A letter to Frank reveals his genial way of giving instruction, as well as the character of the lessons taught. It was written on Frank's birthday :—

" NASHUA, *August 28, 1872.*

" MY OWN DEAR FRANK : I am thinking of you this noon and longing to be with you, but am denied the privilege. I hope you are having a happy anniversary to-day. Your father writes in the spirit of the occasion, although so far away.

" May God bless my dear boy, and guide him by his Spirit and word, that he may be a useful and, in the best sense of the word, a successful man !

" I cannot refrain from telling you that my

heart has been made very happy by the good accounts I have received of your helpfulness, and desire to do duty and make others happy. This is the true secret of happiness, to do something from a right motive, to bless others. May you always live thus, my son !

“Fifteen years old to-day, almost a man in stature and strength. I look over these fifteen years, and think how much of happiness and privilege you have enjoyed, and that after a little time you will have to begin in earnest your life-work. You will never know the care and prayer and anxiety that mother and father have had for you. We shall be amply repaid if we see in you a disposition to live a true manly Christian life.

“Let us live for both worlds, my dear Frank. This is our short home. The long home will be ours soon. Shall it be with Jesus and good people in the enjoyments of heaven? May God grant it! Continue to be true to your convictions of duty, my child. Dare to do right, whatever others may do or say. Love your mother, cherish her as the best friend you will ever have on earth. Few are blest with such a mother.

“From your loving father.”

Such were the sentiments he instilled into the minds of his children. He would have them successful, but only in the highest sense of real nobility. Every day they saw an exemplification of his own teachings; precept and example welded together in himself. Surely, if the young can be aided at all to gain a just estimate of the real value of things, this is the way. It must be a strange perversion of privilege if children thus reared should not so conduct themselves in after life as to bring forth appropriate fruit.

Mr. Wilson was conscientiously benevolent. We say conscientiously, to distinguish it from that hap-hazard style of giving that knows no law but the promptings of blind impulse. He loved to give, but according to principle, that his conscience might be educated in the act, as well as his heart. One of his favorite themes in the pulpit was "Systematic Benevolence." He practiced what he preached.

Immediately after commencing housekeeping he opened an account with his Maker. His reasons for so doing are stated in a book in which he kept his record of benevolences:—



"LAWRENCE, *May 17, 1852.*

"Believing it necessary, if I would secure God's blessing, to have some definite plan of giving alms, after much prayer and thought, I do hereby pledge myself from this date to give one tenth of all my income or earnings to objects of benevolence, and will in this book keep faithful record of the same, and the manner in which my gifts are bestowed.

"I pray God I may do some good with my money as well as by my prayers !

"GEORGE PICKERING WILSON."

At the close of the year 1855 he makes this statement :—

"Have neglected to keep an account of money given for charitable purposes the last year, but have given to the full extent of my ability, and many times have suffered inconvenience from doing so. But I have done it cheerfully, as I hope to receive. God has blessed me the past year with continued health, and I have had constant employment.

"With His assisting grace I will endeavor the next year to keep a faithful record of my charities."

On the page opening the new year is this pledge :—

“Every Saturday night we will lay by *one sixth* part of our earnings or income for the week, to be devoted to benevolent purposes. Believing systematic benevolence to be taught in God’s holy word, we will endeavor faithfully to perform this part of our Christian duty.”

This was signed by himself and wife, as are all subsequent covenants with God of a like nature.

At the close of this year appears another record, as follows :—

“With our present income and expenses, we are fearful we cannot for the coming year devote *one sixth* of our income to the Lord. All we have and are, temporally, spiritually, body, soul, and property, we this day consecrate anew to the Lord, and will devote *one tenth* of our income to benevolent purposes, and *more* if we can consistently with our necessary expenses.”

1860 ends with the following statement :—

“Another year closes, and we are spared, preserved, blessed ! Surely goodness and mercy have followed us. O may we dwell in the house

of the Lord forever! No evil has befallen us; no plague come nigh our dwelling. We have found it *good* to commit our way unto the Lord, to trust in him. And he *has* brought it to pass. We would be his forever. Amen.

1862 opens with the following song of gladness :—

“For the first time for many years we have a small balance on hand for the next year. Praised be God for continued prosperity and happiness! In basket and store we have been abundantly blessed. We have had more income than ever before, for which we are to give an account to God. Another year, with God’s help, we will consecrate *one tenth* of all our income to the Lord.”

1865 commences with a review of the plan, and some reflections on the subject of systematic benevolence :—

“After thirteen years’ trial, we are firmly convinced that the plan of *Systematic Benevolence* is both right and scriptural, and that God’s blessing always attends it. Deeply grateful to God for the great blessings of health and employment, for home and dear children, we would again consecrate soul, body, time, property, all we

have, and are, or hope to be, to the service of our heavenly Father. We will in this book keep a faithful record of one tenth of all our income, which we now devote to the Lord.

“Where little is given, little is required.

“Where much is given, much is required.”

Let it be understood that this was not done without sacrifice. Rigid economy was necessary to fulfill these pledges. The home of Mr. Wilson was not distinguished for its luxurious furniture. The personal adornments were apostolic, not worldly. The soul of neatness and taste was displayed every-where, but simplicity, like the veil of a bride, was thrown over all the life.

His policy is worthy of commendation. We are not so sure that the one-tenth principle is a Christian duty. He was not sure himself, as shown by his effort to do more. There should be some settled plan of giving to the Lord adopted by every person, and carefully instilled into the conscience of childhood, but we doubt the propriety of fixing the limit at one tenth. That may serve as an average standard, like a thermometric zero, but circumstances should vary the percentage of the benefactions. It

would be injurious for multitudes to stop at that limit ; it would not be just for a few to reach it. For Mr. Wilson, with his income, it may have been just right. He tried more ; he failed to accomplish his heart's desire. But the spirit of the man teaches us a lesson.

O when will the Christian Church have a highly instructed conscience and heart in the use of money ! All professions of holiness without it are the hollow sounds of self-deception. Our benevolent enterprises will always be in financial jeopardy, in peril of temporary disaster, unless we can secure the most positive convictions of personal responsibility in the use of gold. On the other hand, the best fund the Church can have is a people with an intelligent conviction of their duties to God in the matter of benevolence. We will trust God's people to any extent, if they see and feel aright on this question. We need no incorporated funds for coming generations. Such accumulations of property, except as endowments of institutions of learning, have never failed to curse the cause they were intended to promote. The best fund a Church can possibly possess is a warm heart, an enlightened conscience, and a spirit of sacri-

fice. Let us have such homes and such hearts as we have found in that snug little cottage on Garden-street, and God's treasury will never be empty, or his cause languish for want of funds to press the battle forward.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## LIFE MAXIMS.

CHERISHED quotations are very accurate gauges of a man's character. They show the bent of the soul, and the inclination of the ideal nature. Mr. Wilson was very fond of poetic gems. He culled them from books and papers, as florists gather flowers from the garden. It was his custom to write the finest sentiments he read in the front and rear pages of his Diaries, and, as he traveled about on his deeds of charity, commit them to memory. Those quotations were usually selected that expressed his most cherished purposes in life. They are, therefore, the man writing down his inmost soul in the gifted language of the masters of literature. He practiced what they penned. We leave the reader to judge which was the grander, the writing or the doing. We give some of these as indicating his secret aspirations:—

*Taken from the fly-leaf of an old Diary.*

“Not myself, but the truth that in life I have spoken ;  
 Not myself, but the seed that in life I have sown,  
 Shall pass on to ages ; all about me forgotten  
 Save the truth I have spoken, the things I have done.”

All his old Diaries have inscribed on them as the consecrating sentiment : “Not slothful in business ; fervent in spirit ; serving the Lord.”

How sweetly do these quotations harmonize with his whole life.

“I live—

“‘For the cause that lacks assistance,  
 For the wrong that needs resistance,  
 For the future in the distance,  
 And the good that I can do.’”

“Let thy alms go before and keep heaven’s gate  
 Open for thee, or both may come too late.”

“Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.”

From Diary of 1867 :—“There is but one rare and precious coin with which you can purchase the costly treasure of a child’s heart ; and the coin bears this superscription—*Love*.”

“Lost for want of a word—a word that I might have spoken ;  
 Who knows what eyes are dim—what hearts are aching and  
 broken ?

Go scatter beside all waters, nor sicken at hope deferred ;  
 Let never a soul by thy dumbness be lost for want of a word.”



"The holy supper is kept indeed,  
In whatso we share with another's need.  
Not that which we give, but what we share,  
For the gift without the giver is bare.  
Who bestows himself, with his alms feeds three :  
Himself, his hungry neighbor, and me."

From Diary of 1868 :—

"Trust in God and do the right,  
So do I gather strength and hope anew.  
Full well I know thy patient love perceives,  
Not what I did, but what I strove to do ;  
And though the full ripe ears be sadly few,  
Thou wilt accept my sheaves."

From Diary of 1869 :—

"I begin to see that religion consists not so much in joyful feelings, as in constant exercise of devotedness to God, and in laying ourselves out for the good of others."

"Christian, if you would be free  
From the world's corroding care,  
In the haunts of misery learn  
How great your comforts are.  
While you trust in Jesus' blood,  
Taste the sweets of *doing good*."

From Diary of 1870 :—

"The prayers of health are most likely to be acceptable. Sickness may choke our devotion,

and we are accepted rather by our life than by our death."

"Every man's life-work is what its discipline amounts to. We are put into this world to be trained.

"It is something a man can have, even when his hands are crossed in his coffin.

"How a man feels toward God and toward his fellow-men, is the question which life's discipline decides: What his influences are; what his principles; what his rules of action."

From Diary of 1871:—

"I want to be little, more weak, and more mild;  
More like my blest Master, and more like a child;  
More watchful, more prayerful, more lowly in mind;  
More thoughtful, more gentle, more humble and kind."

"Show us, Lord, where we may labor;  
Lead us thither by thy hand;  
And may we some friend, some neighbor,  
Safely guide to Canaan's land."

"I am a scholar—

The great Lord of love and life my tutor is,  
Who from above all who seek learning to his school invites."

From Diary of 1872:—

"The thing surpasses all my thought,  
But faithful is my Lord;  
Through unbelief I stagger not,  
For God hath spoke the word.

“Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees,  
And looks to that alone ;  
Laughs at impossibilities,  
And cries, It shall be done.”

“That I spent, that I had ;  
That I gave, that I have ;  
That I left, that I lost.”

“If so poor a worm as I  
May to thy great glory live,  
All my actions sanctify,  
All my words and thought receive ;  
Claim me for thy service, claim  
All I have, and all I am.

“Take my soul and body’s powers,  
Take my memory, mind, and will :  
All my goods, and all my hours,  
All I know, and all I feel ;  
All I think, or speak, or do :  
Take my heart, but make it new.”

“If you would not be a swearer, don’t begin ;  
In the first low uttered oath lies the sin.”

“That man may breathe, but never lives,  
Who much receives, but nothing gives ;  
Whom none can love, whom none can thank,  
Creation’s blot, creation’s blank.”

“Make us of one heart and mind,  
Courteous, pitiful, and kind ;  
Lowly, meek, in thought and word,  
Altogether like our Lord.”

" Hushing every muttered murmur,  
Let your fortitude the firmer  
    Gird your soul with strength ;  
While, no treason near her lurking,  
Patience, in her perfect working,  
    Shall be queen at length."

" That best portion of a good man's life,  
His little nameless, unremembered acts  
Of kindness and of love."

From Diary of 1873 :—

" By the ties this vice hath riven,  
    By the homes this sin hath moved,  
By the souls this curse hath driven  
    Unreclaim'd to their reward ;  
By the earth which it is thinning,  
    By the hell which ends its track,  
Use your influence with the sinning,  
    Guide your Father's stray sheep back."

" Direct, control, suggest this day  
All I design, or do, or say ;  
That all my powers, with all their might,  
In thy sole glory may unite."

These were the illuminated mottoes that he hung in the consecrated apartments of his soul, and read over and over in the midst of his abundant labors. How they refreshed and inspired his nobler being none but he and God can tell. They must have been like angel voices cheering him on to duty.

But there is one verse so full of meaning, so prophetic in its sentiment, and so touching in its associations, that I cannot give it without a word of explanation. Before Mr. Wilson removed to Boston he hesitated, through a sense of his own weakness and lack of professional training, to assume the responsibilities of such a work. But God and the Church seemed to call, and he decided to attempt the task. Just at that time he fell in with these lines, and at once made them his own. Every-where he went he carried them with him in memory, and repeated them at every discouraging point to cheer him on :—

“ Few powers, no wisdom, no renown,  
Only my life can I lay down ;  
Only my heart, Lord, can I bring,  
And pray, to theeward I may lead each day  
Some fainting soul :  
Lord, here am I.”

Prophetic words ! With a “ Lord, here am I,” he marched on without hesitation to the sacrifice.

Surely, if there be any majesty in goodness, any glory in devotion to a noble purpose, any sublimity in a life of self-immolation on God’s

altar for man's salvation, we have it here in all its native brilliancy.

A newly-bound Bible in the possession of his family has a text in it, marked with a pencil, written in Mr. Wilson's well-known hand. By the side of this passage are these words : " My text." That scriptural sentiment reads as follows : " Trust in the Lord, and do good ; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." Psa. xxxvii, 3.

Verily he overcame the world by faith ; a faith that fully met the demands of the apostle of practical morality, St. James.

Having had some passing glimpses at the private life and secret inspirations of Mr. Wilson, we turn again into the path of history, and take up the thread of events where we left it—at his effectual call from Lawrence to another field of action.

## CHAPTER IX.

## MISSION WORK IN BOSTON.

METHODISM had not made as rapid progress in Boston as in other social centers of our country until quite recently. From the time when Jesse Lee was denied an open door in the metropolis of New England, either for worship or hospitality, that branch of the Christian Church which he sought to plant has had to contend with special difficulties. But in spite of all these obstacles, Methodism has made a slow though steady growth. During the last decade new movements were inaugurated for its expansion. A city missionary was appointed for the purpose of cultivating the neglected districts. This was the little-acorn from which has grown a vigorous tree. In 1869 the "Boston Sunday-School and Missionary Society" was chartered, and a vigorous worker appointed to supervise it. This association was subsequently incorporated under the name of the "Boston Missionary and Church Extension

Society." Its object as set forth in its constitution, is, "To carry the means of grace to the neglected and destitute portions of our population, by establishing and aiding Methodist Episcopal Churches, and by all other appropriate methods for advancing the cause of Christ."

The Society has already justified its existence by what it has accomplished. During the year 1873 "it has had under consideration twenty-two Church enterprises in various stages of development, from the mission visits from house to house to gather a Sunday-school, to the congregation in some pleasant Church about to assume its own responsibilities and make a home."

Such a society, judiciously managed, cannot fail to extend the Redeemer's kingdom in the "regions beyond," and carry the Gospel where Jesus himself would take it were he here among men. May it receive the hearty support it deserves !

In 1871 the missionary employed resigned, and the Executive Board was called upon to choose a successor. When the subject came up but one name seemed to meet the necessi-



ties of the occasion—George P. Wilson. With the greatest unanimity he was selected to be the standard-bearer of the Society, and a strong committee was appointed to secure his consent and services. This was the call before referred to—this the startling summons to a new and untried field of labor. Some years before the same mission had sought his services, but his hour had not then come. He had not felt the call as of God, and had declined. But now an entire change had transpired in his convictions of duty.

This call came to him as from Heaven. Most devoutly he prayed to be divinely directed. He sought only to know the pleasure of his Master. There were many influences binding him, like fetters of steel, to his old home. His friendships were intimate and precious; his work thoroughly organized and completely in hand. But there were family considerations that prompted him to accept. In addition to these, the work to which he was called he appreciated more than all others. He firmly believed the Gospel to be the only remedy for human wretchedness. While poverty might be alleviated for a time by the distribution of alms, he

felt there was no hope of a permanent relief but in the religion of Jesus. As he sometimes expressed it, "It is better to build men up from within, than to attempt to save them by removing the natural consequences of sin." This had been his policy in his charitable work. While he gave money and clothing to the needy, he had always sought to give them something better than gold—he would give them Christ. And now a broad field was opened to him, full of gracious opportunities. His soul kindled before the thought of preaching the Gospel to the poor, of gathering in the neglected classes, organizing them into religious centers, and attaching the homeless to the Church of his choice. His sanctified ambition reveled in the spiritual possibilities of such a field ; the work seeming to him but a copy of his Saviour's ministry. It is not strange, therefore, that the change commended itself to his judgment, and that he decided in the affirmative. After due delay, and careful inquiry into the nature of the work and the demands upon him, he consented to take the position. His Diary contains this item :—

" *Washington's Birthday.*—At four P. M. the Board of Advice met, and my resignation as

City Missionary was accepted. This step has not been taken without much thought and prayer. An open door presents itself for usefulness and *hard work* in Boston. My dear wife is in poor health, caused by devotion to the mission work, and she must and shall be relieved. We have many dear friends in Lawrence, and it will be exceedingly hard to leave, but it seems to be right."

His labors in Lawrence closed March 24, 1872. A vast audience gathered in the City Hall to listen to his final report and parting words. His farewell address we copy, as partially reported, from a city paper:—

"Thirteen years ago last Saturday he commenced his labors as City Missionary, and he thanked God for the privilege of spending thirteen years of his young manhood in so blessed a service. He accepted the office when it was tendered to him gratefully, and in accordance with his own earnest convictions that he could accomplish some good. In looking back upon the work performed, he said he would give a few figures showing how much the mission had accomplished during its existence. He had made eighteen thousand eight hundred and

sixty-seven visits ; attended four hundred and ninety-four funerals ; relieved two thousand five hundred families and nine hundred and seventy-one strangers ; there had been seven thousand three hundred and forty-nine garments given to those who needed them ; eight thousand two hundred and fourteen yards of cloth distributed ; he had attended one hundred and seventy-four weddings ; had expended fourteen thousand seven hundred and thirty-nine dollars from the relief fund, and disbursed from the Pemberton Relief Fund ten thousand dollars. The result attained in thirteen years' labor," he said, "had been accomplished by systematizing the work in the beginning, and aiming to reach the poor, the hungry, the sick, the imprisoned, and the stranger. The by-laws of the mission have been, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.' The mission has been largely successful in suppressing street begging by taking away the necessity for it. It has assisted in establishing and maintaining an enlightened, careful, and humane policy toward the poor of all classes. It has aided in promoting the growth and wealth of this city, in rescuing from poverty, and

contributing to the laboring element those who must have sank but for the timely assistance which brought them through their trials, restoring them to health, and making them useful members of society.

“The strong arms and the skillful hands of our working people are our capital and wealth, and it has aimed to promote their welfare, standing by them in the hours of trial which visit every condition of human life. It has also been a watch against deceit ; and while the poor have been benefited, the wealthy and generous have been safe from imposition. The office of the City Missionary has ever been the natural center of operations whenever any great crisis or calamity has occurred ; and Mr. Wilson alluded to the Pemberton mill accident and the Rebellion, when the mission became such a necessity, and was made so useful to the interests of the people. It has been a bond of union to the Churches, uniting them on the broad platform of the golden rule and the teachings of Christ. It has been successful in causing Christians to forget denominational differences, throwing down the barriers of creed, or bringing them so low that they could leap over them for aggressive work,

forgetting they were Episcopalians, Baptists, Methodists, etc., in their desire to follow the example of Christ in their treatment of his brethren. It has also been instrumental in accomplishing a great educational work, having established a free evening school, a sewing school, a Band of Hope, thereby promoting temperance and accomplishing much good. It has, by the personal work of the missionary among the intemperate, redeemed many from vice ; while it has taken hold of the young generation, instilled into them temperance principles, and guarded them in some measure against the temptations incident to youth. During its existence it has never turned away a needy and deserving person for want of funds ; and only in one single instance has the treasury been empty. The people have been generous in their contributions to its support, and often it presumed on their good will. In speaking his parting words, he said he could not help alluding to the silent partner in his labors—his wife. Her devotion to the cause of the poor had been great and unceasing. He had not alone been City Missionary. She had ever assisted and encouraged him in his labor. But

the constant wear and tear connected with the duties had undermined her health, and this was the principal reason for his leaving the mission. He might have remained many years longer in the discharge of these duties, in which he took so much pleasure, but he felt that he could not endanger the life of one who had been so constant and unremitting in her care for the poor and the suffering — who had been an equal though silent partner with him in all the labors connected with the mission.

“‘I leave the work,’ he said, ‘with a conscience void of offense toward God and man. I have coveted no man’s silver or gold ; I have had neither poverty nor riches, but have ever had food enough to eat, and have always been blessed with a good appetite and a clear conscience. I have adopted from choice the homes of the poor for my visiting places instead of the comfortable homes and cheerful firesides to which I have been so often invited. I believe this to be a Christ-like work. *My poor, my children, my prisoners*, are words of the deepest significance to me, penetrating to the innermost recesses of my soul.’

“At this point Mr. Wilson became very much

affected ; his voice was choked with emotion ; it was impossible to proceed ; and with a few words commending his successor to their love, he sat down, amid the sobbings and grief of an afflicted audience. How tenderly touching these closing words ! Every home was freely open to this noble workman ; but he had no time to keep company with the rich, he was too much interested in doing good to the poor. What a lesson to us all ! What a precious suggestion to every Christian pastor ! The jealousies that sometimes exist in Churches between classes and social gradations are not always produced without injudicious provocations. It should be the aim of every minister to be impartial in his visitations, and if he err at all, err on the side of the friendless and forgotten ones."

Hitherto Mr. Wilson had held only the relation of local preacher in the Church. He had passed satisfactory examinations, and been ordained local deacon and elder, but had not been connected with the traveling ministry. It was deemed best, by wise counselors, that he should now connect himself with that ministry by joining the New England Conference of the M. E.



Church. But this necessitated an examination before the Conference Committee. When the Committee met, Mr. Wilson was unavoidably detained at home by business of his mission, which required settlement before his departure; but such was the confidence and esteem of the ministers in his ability, and honesty of purpose to fulfill every duty imposed upon him, that they voted unanimously to waive the examination, and receive him without the legal formalities. This course is unusual; but the man was known, and his brethren felt no hesitation in showing him this mark of their respect and confidence.

In undertaking this Boston work, he was at times much oppressed with a sense of personal unworthiness and lack of professional training. This was not mock modesty, that craves the stimulus of flattery, but a feeling of personal insufficiency, having its origin in self-depreciation, and a high estimate of learning and rank. He felt little and weak side by side with the men with whom he would be brought into comparison. In these hours of depression he found a helper in his devoted wife. It is but justice to her to insert just here a letter to her husband concerning these fears:—

“... Now, George, please remember what Surgeon-General D—— said to you: ‘Go to Boston with the determination to be the same humble, sincere Christian man you have always been, and don’t let Boston students or theologians scare you out of your own good common sense.’ The Board has not called you to teach or preach theology, but to go out after men, after souls, after children, that great scholars and theologians fail to reach. You have the theology of ‘love;’ the religion of hard, persevering, patient labor for Christ. You have an experience among men that no school can give—a God-given power to reach men’s hearts that few possess. Go, my dear husband, with your eye single to Christ, and Boston ministers and students will cease to be an obstacle. I shall be dreadfully disappointed in you if you show the white feather, when you know you are called to a place which none of them, with all their learning, are adapted to fill. For my part I have no fears as long as you are *yourself*, and go in the name of Christ.”

A few days later another epistle followed containing these words:—

“... I thought of you Thursday. I am

sure, George, you have had your seven years' training, not in these schools, perhaps, but in God's school, among *men* and *things* as they really are; and your *experience*, if you do your best to make your sermons plain, practical, and personal, is worth more to you, and will be the means of doing more good, than a store of dead languages can ever do. It is every person's duty to inform themselves as well as they can; but God's great work for his ministers is *to win souls*; and one living, earnest, faithful man will do more for his fellow-men than a dozen Greek and Latin scholars without earnestness and labor. You have no need to feel sad. You ought to rejoice that God has granted you so much success, and blessed your labors so abundantly. Go on, my husband, and no one may dare to say that you are not in the path of duty, because you have God's seal. God honors and blesses you, and your five talents are fast becoming ten."

These are brave words. They give us a glimpse behind the scenes, and reveal a source of power that must be felt to be appreciated. Next to the power of the Divine Presence is the inspiration of a true wife. Mr. Wilson was not alone in his life-work. He only appeared

upon the stage; but close at hand, though invisible to the audience, was a well-known form, cheering him in the part he acted. These precious words must have come to his hesitating heart with somewhat of the power of that laconic message sent to a noted Boston orator by his wife on a certain great occasion, "Don't shilly-shally to-day, Wendell."

April 7, 1872, Mr. Wilson preached his first sermon in his new field. He entered at once vigorously on his mission. Eight preaching-places in various parts of the city awaited his supervision. These appointments were miles apart, with Sabbath services, week-day prayer and class-meetings, all to be supplied by his personal oversight. As the year rolled on other places were added. To meet the demands of this work, constantly augmenting, he enrolled as many of the students of the Boston Theological Seminary as he could secure as helpers, and made in advance quarterly plans for each appointment. In case of sickness or unavoidable disappointment, it fell to his lot to see the place supplied. This work alone involved no little running and anxiety. In addition to this, he was expected to collect the funds for the

expenses of the mission, aside from his own salary. The magnitude of this task will be seen when it is stated that in his first yearly report he returns the sum of seventeen thousand three hundred and thirty-five dollars as the income of the year for these purposes. These moneys were secured by personal appeal, public meetings, and Church contributions. By force of circumstances, or thoughtlessness on the part of his friends, the collecting of these sums, much of which was on subscription, fell upon him. And now we are prepared to show, as in a nutshell, the first year's labor he performed. He found the work in somewhat of an embarrassed condition. His predecessor had struggled nobly with its difficulties, but failing health had made it impossible to do all he had wished. Mr. Wilson organized it anew, and secured as many co-laborers as possible. After this had been accomplished his regular duties required, first, the care of seeing all these widely-scattered appointments supplied; second, the wearing task of collecting thousands of dollars, most of it secured by visiting the subscribers, scattered over a great city, often disappointed in seeing the parties, and as often thoughtlessly

requested to call again ; third, the monthly notification by letter of all the officers of the mission, over seventy in number, of the regular business meeting ; fourth, the visitation of the families and sick of the various appointments ; fifth, administration of the sacrament, Sunday-school addresses, prayer and class-meetings, and from one to three sermons on the Sabbath. The work he performed is simply appalling. An Alpine avalanche, thundering down the mountain side, is just as healthful as such a task as this. Some men would carry these burdens without personal injury, by letting every thing run loose and smiling at the consequences, but Mr. Wilson was not one of this class. He carried every portion of his work on his heart, calmly but seriously. He never fretted under his burdens, but he often staggered from his devotion and conscientious fidelity to his trusts. It was his life-long habit to have every thing in order, and ready for the morrow, before he retired to rest.

In three months after he had entered upon this work, and grasped its magnitude, he felt his life imperiled ; yet he never faltered, never complained, never shrank from the sacrifice. Like the leader of a forlorn hope, he calmly

moved on to meet his fate. His Diary tells the sad tale of overwork. Every few days he drops a reference to his extreme exhaustion. In the light of the present, these passing allusions to his weariness are exceedingly sad. As early as May he tells us: "Have felt exhausted all the week; the work of the last month was altogether too much for me." "Let your moderation be known unto all men." "God bless this work and give me wisdom and strength for it."

*May 31.*—(This sentence tells its own story:) "Am somehow exhausted."

As the heat of August came on he sank under the load, and was compelled to leave the city for rest. But such was the nature of his work that with his departure it must languish. The whole superstructure rested on this frail pillar, and if its support was removed it fell. This fact made complete rest impossible. He returned as speedily as his strength would permit, having just escaped by his flight an attack of the dreaded typhoid. As he takes up the burden once more he drops this line in his Diary: "Thank God for the privilege of working!" The remainder of the year afforded abundant opportunity for this kind of thankfulness.

His last New-Year's morning found him in acts of devotion. "Was on my knees at twelve this morning with a few Christian friends at Washington Village. O Lord, take me to be thine! All I have, and am, or hope to be, I unreservedly dedicate to thee. Help me, O Lord! Have had a little overwork for a few days."

These days of toil and weariness were not wanting in seasons of refreshing. January 12th is a specimen of other successful and inspiring days that we meet with in his daily record. "Sermon and sacrament at Windsor Chapel. Sermon at Eggleston Square. Prayer-meeting in the evening. Ten forward for prayers. A blessed day. O my Father, give me souls, and no labor or sacrifice shall be too great. Help me to be faithful and I leave the result with thee!"

"*January 25.*—This has been a week of more than usual pressure. Not only the care of the Churches, but very much else comes upon me. O Lord, give me grace and wisdom for all my need!"

"*March 23.*—A good day. Preached at Windsor in the morning. Held class-meeting for half an hour afterward. Walked two miles to dinner. Walked one and a half miles to hold a



meeting in the house of a sick brother. Preached at three P. M. Visited sick lady. Walked one and a half miles to cars ; took tea at restaurant. Went to Harrison Square and preached. Had an extraordinary meeting at its close ; truly a means of grace."

"*Sunday, April 20.*—Up early. Preached at Windsor Chapel on Joseph. Spoke at Revere-street and Charlestown Neck Sunday-school. Preached at Mattapan ; ran a mile to get there ; walked one and a half miles to get back. Home at ten P. M. after a good day. Bless the Lord, O my soul !"

With such labors as these he closed the conference year, and repaired to Lynn to meet his brethren and pass his examinations. His preparation for this ordeal was made between January and April, amid the pressure of other duties, and was pronounced most excellent. The three months of the new year had been the most busy of his whole life. The private jottings of each day show one thing—a perpetual strain on his vitality. His life was an incessant run. The end in view was subscriptions. Often when he had tracked a delinquent to his lair, he seems to have met with a cold denial. And yet only

once in his Diary he gives vent to his bitter disappointment, and then in the following softened phraseology: "Some men are very *unexpected* in their honor about a subscription paper." That is all; the phraseology intentionally obscure, but there is meaning in it.

The Conference was a jubilee to him. Bating an address of great sweetness to the children at the Sunday-school anniversary, the week was one of rest and delight. He seemed like a child set free from a great perplexity. During its progress he returned home to the anniversary supper of his marriage, the last of earth. This is his comment:—

"Twenty years ago to-day my dear wife and I united our hearts and hands for life. God never gave a man a truer helpmeet, or a more noble, self-sacrificing wife. May I prove worthy of her! Twenty years of happiness and prosperity! The future is known only to God. We trust in him and say, 'Jehovah-jireh!'"

Conference over, Mr. Wilson returned to his post of duty. The old story is repeated. Suddenly it closes with these ominous words:—

"*Tuesday, June 17.*—Was nearly sick all day; did not go out." [The rest is blank.]

On the 8th of June, at Windsor Chapel, he preached from these words: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." It was his last discourse. A fitting subject for his farewell to the pulpit. The first sentiment of the text had been most fully exemplified in his own experience, and faith sees the promise appended to it verified in the blessed beyond. A day or two before this discourse he called on one of the students of the seminary to secure his services for a few Sabbaths, and found him quite ill. After a few moments conversation he rose to leave, remarking, "My brother, there is rest by and by." As he reached the door he turned, repeated the remark, and added, "And we know not how near it may be to some of us." "The next time I saw him," says this person, "I drew my hand softly across his brow; it was cold in death."

These expressions of his were, no doubt, the presentiments of an exhausted vitality—the instinctive cry of weariness for repose. It was not the soul that made the suggestion; that had rest, the rest of faith, of conscious reconciliation with the Father. It was the appeal of the body, overtaxed and burdened, for relief; and since

it could not find it in the sphere of duty, it sought it in the grave.

On whom lies the responsibility of this wasting toil, that ends so suddenly in an unwritten Diary? *Nobody—every body*. The groundwork of the difficulty lies in our modern life. This is an age of railroads and telegraphs, and also of quick departures into eternity. Life is a perpetual hum. Some are millionaires at thirty, and dead soon after.

Vice has caught the infection and grows with tropical rapidity. Every species of iniquity fairly gallops in its eagerness to people perdition, and what can the good do but attempt the rescue of its victims by adopting the same pace. Every spiritual agency is in a hurry. Methodism especially seems to have caught the contagious spirit of haste and intensity. She was taught it by her founder, who fairly flew through England on his great mission. But if she was inspired with his working spirit, she soon forgot the calmness in which he toiled for the Master. Wesley's wisdom is displayed most brightly in conscientiously doing his best, and then retiring to sleep in the sweetest unconcern about consequences. These he left with the ever-sleep-

less One. The Church of God needs to learn this lesson of *calm activity*. It comes only from the highest degree of faith. If we live aright, preach the truth, and keep diligently employed, we may rest assured that vice will never outstrip us and gain the world as a prize. This unseemly haste crushes men. Our best are used up when they should just begin to wield their weapons with the skill of veteran workmen. The willing ones are the first to die, because the load is heavy, the demands imperious, and the many slow to bear their share of responsibility. Goaded on by circumstances, these heroic natures carry the burdens that belong to the crowd, and, staggering beneath the unnatural load, fall victims to the pressure of holy enterprises. There is no cure for this but a better distribution of labor. If so much must be done the work must be more completely organized. The apostles have set us the right example. See Acts vii, 1-4.

John Wesley fashioned a Church that cannot be surpassed for efficiency if its machinery be managed as he directed. But more and more its methods are neglected, and many of the responsibilities that belong to the laymen are

heaped on the shoulders of the ministry. Some carry these accumulated burdens carelessly ; some cast them off with a smile ; while others take them up conscientiously as a part of the Christian's cross, and die under the load. And who is responsible? Nobody in particular ; every body in general. Since these are facts, it well becomes us, as brethren, to watch carefully each other ; and shield, as far as possible, by sympathy and help, those free and willing spirits that carry without protest their own burdens, and as many more as a thoughtless brotherhood may cast upon them.

## CHAPTER X.

## THE CLOSING SCENES.

**A**MID the festivities of Boston, on the anniversary of her battle-day, on the slopes of Bunker Hill, June 17, Mr. Wilson withdrew from active service, and threw himself, weary and feverish, on a sick-bed. The disease that had been averted the previous summer by a timely escape into the country now attacked him, and for many days he lay prostrate and helpless with that species of fever that never hesitates to assault an exhausted system—the typhoid. At first it was not violent, and soon gave way before medical skill. His anxious brethren were rejoiced to learn that the danger was past, and all he needed was rest.

But just at this critical period a trying task came upon him. The regular meeting of the Mission Board was close at hand, and the notification of its members demanded attention. A friend volunteered to aid in this work, but the

care of it fell upon his own weary brain. In his weak condition it was no light task to supervise the preparation of seventy-five letters with perplexing directions.

He lay on his sick-bed and saw the work completed, the packages tied up ready for the mail, and then, with a sigh of relief, asked to be dressed, that he might have rest and change. In a few moments his wife entered the room, glanced at his countenance, and marked, with love's quick intuitions, the deathly pallor of his face, the token of his dreaded relapse. His last endeavor to have every duty *promptly* and *faithfully* performed had signed his death-warrant ; his inevitable "it *must* be done" cost him his life. He was taken immediately back to his room, and lay down exhausted, saying cheerfully, "The dear Lord knows best, and I do trust him."

Rev. Mr. Mallalieu, the pastor of the Church with which his family was connected, frequently attended his bedside during these days, offering his services freely whenever an opportunity seemed to manifest itself. He took the records from Mr. Wilson, and urged him to throw off all anxiety about his mission duties.



He promised to do so, adding most cheerfully,

“O, do not be discouraged,  
For Jesus is your friend !”

Friday, July 4, the physician pronounced the relapse serious, and cautioned the need of perfect rest. From that hour he sank rapidly. Medical skill and the ministries of love were baffled. A slight delirium prevailed, with occasional glimpses of reason, like sunshine flashing through the summer clouds. During these lucid intervals he dropped many expressions indicating the under currents of feeling. On Monday he talked calmly of a long illness, repeating again and again, with sweetest resignation, “The dear Lord knows best, and I do trust him !”

But his efforts to throw off the burden of his work was not entirely successful. “I must, O I must get well !” “What will become of my work ?” “How can I give up my strength ?” were the outcries of his heart as he reflected on his situation.

In the first moments of delirium he broke out, “It is all right now, the work will go on ; I have raised seventy-five thousand dollars ;

Brother S—— has given fifty thousand dollars ; all right now !”

Then he grew calm, and his thoughts fled heavenward. “Paradise opens ; I am all ready ;” “Jesus, blessed Jesus !” fell again and again from his lips. Tuesday brought hopes that the worst was over. He recognized friends from Lawrence who kindly came to minister to him, called them by name, and many times seemed improving. But it was all delusive. Wednesday morning brought increasing distress and delirium.

There are some days in human life that can never be forgotten. They are epochs in one’s earthly pilgrimage, related to life as great battle-fields to a nation’s history. They are our Waterloos, Sedans, and Gettysburghs. They are the supreme moments of joy or agony ; the Gethsemanes of life, the crisis hours of experience. Wednesday, July 9, was such a day in the home of Mr. Wilson. Well may his wife call it “that dreadful day.” Dreadful, because helpless love was tortured through all its lingering hours by a delirious mind wrestling with the eventful past.

In the early part of the day the struggle

with his history commenced. At first his disordered reason contended with the difficulties of the work in Boston. He seemed to be staggering under an insupportable load. Weary with his burden, he begged to be released. Again and again he called for different members of the Mission Board to come to his relief. With pitiful moans, whose depth and intensity are only begotten by mania, he called to his attendants "Let these weary hands have rest." Turning once to his wife with a look of surprise, as if the very foundations of his soul were giving way, he asked in a low whisper full of inexpressible doubt and woe, "Emily, is this the history of the saints? We are betrayed, we are betrayed!"

This state of mind continued until late in the day, when with a supreme effort he threw off his work in Boston. But the battle was not yet done. Memory ran back along the pathway of his experience, and called up his mission-work in Lawrence. During the night he went over it all. The Band of Hope was before him; funeral scenes, with their tears and breaking hearts, appealed to him for sympathy. He called the children by name, prayed for them with

his own inimitable tenderness, and besought his wife to gather them all in. "O the children, the dear children, the tender children!"

Then came the last struggle. As Thursday morning dawned it began. He was not now pleading for rest, but for reputation. In his mania he saw himself, as in a court of justice, face to face with his traducers, bringing accusations against his manhood, and striving to blast his character, dearer to him than life. Calling them by name, he challenged them to the trial. He met their charges with the impassioned eloquence of outraged honesty and slandered virtue pleading for honor, as the innocent alone can plead. The contest was not long. He quickly finished his defense, and with a full, round voice signed it with his name—George P. Wilson. His life-work was done. He sank back exhausted, and lay in peaceful weariness.

Shall we call the bright halo with which affection invests the features of our earthly friends. the illumination of love, or the reflected luster of invisible wings, or the glory of the Lord shining round the pillow of the dying saint, and casting an angelic beauty over the countenance? It matters not. But as Mr. Wilson lay in calm

repose after his long struggle with the momentous facts of memory, a light as from the heavenly world seemed to play over his features, and herald the immediate advent of the transfiguration hour.

In a few moments he fell asleep in Jesus. Thursday morning at eight o'clock he died. A fitting sentiment closed his eventful history. His last words were, "That is all ; it is done." And his loving Lord will yet assert, in the hearing of an assembled world, "Well done !"

" The weary hands had rest,  
The troubled heart repose ;  
The toiler was the Saviour's guest,  
Released from earthly woes."

Saturday morning at eleven o'clock some ministerial friends gathered at the house for brief religious services, preparatory to the removal of his remains to Lawrence. His wife, prostrated by the incessant watchings and grief of those sad days, was unable to follow him to his final resting-place. With Christian resignation she gave the precious casket into the hands of Rev. Mr. Fisher, pastor of the First Congregational Church of Lawrence, for years a devoted friend of Mr. Wilson, with these touch-

ing words : " Bury it tenderly ; I cannot go up. Take him with you ; he was without stain ; he was a pure man—a faithful man. Take him to Lawrence, and let him rest there."

The funeral services were held in the Garden-street Methodist Episcopal Church, Saturday, July 12, at two P. M. The audience room was heavily draped, and crowded with the citizens and immediate friends. The exercises were exceedingly affecting. Rev. Dr. Clark, Presiding Elder of the Boston District, presented the labors of the deceased in the Boston Mission. He spoke of the unanimity with which he had been called to that work. " He was the one man," said he, " to whom all eyes turned ; and when the Board secured this man of God, they felt they had got the right man in the right place. His labors have justified the confidence reposed in him. His wisdom, his self-forgetful devotion, his enthusiasm, fitted him peculiarly for such a work. The obstacles, the little annoyances peculiar to his position, he met with courage—with a courage that the most renowned general that ever drew a sword never surpassed. He never exhibited any feeling of discouragement ; his enthusiasm

never cooled. The Board honored his wisdom, respected his sage counsels, and the most clear-headed among them would hesitate long before refusing to accept them, and the result invariably justified their confidence. Besides all this, nature made him a perfect gentleman, and his intercourse with all was pleasant. When the intelligence of his death became known men unused to weeping shed tears ; a feeling of deep sadness pervaded the community. The children loved him, and their little faces brightened at his approach. Though suddenly taken away, his influence and example still live. Though dead, he yet speaks—speaks through his noble example, his faith, his heroism. His life is a legacy of value that cannot be computed ; his life, as an example, will remain, and be a power reaching far down into the future. Sainted brother, let thy mantle fall on us !”

Rev. C. E. Fisher, the clergyman into whose hands his remains had been intrusted, followed with an eloquent tribute to his memory. He said : “ Our work in Lawrence commenced in consecutive months. I think there is no one to whom I could better compare him than Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost.

I know the heart of Lawrence, and I know that it loved him, and that it now mourns him. I thank God for such an example—such a grand example, so long manifested before this people, as that shown by this man of God. Of him we might say, as is said in one of John's epistles, 'Hereby perceive we the love of God, because' he laid down his life for us : and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.'

"Our brother was also like John ; not only a loving heart had he, but his life was full of love. At times, like John, he was a Boanerges, a son of thunder ; but love was the inspiration of his fidelity. His life was, indeed, a beautiful example. Always at work for the Master : now on the Common, now in the Sunday-school, now in the jail preaching repentance and eternal life to the prisoners. In this work he was laying down his life for the brethren. It is not a hard thing to die. Many go unsummoned into eternity ; many seek death on the battle-field for fame ; but it is a difficult thing to lay down one's life for the brethren as he did. He loved every person in the city with a strong, disinterested, unselfish love. From him the pastors derived much benefit. The young men and



young women, and especially those who had grown up in the Band of Hope, are deeply indebted to him. God will bless his memory to us, and his work will live on and on forever."

Rev. Mr. Mallalieu related the experiences of his last days, and closed with touching words of eulogy.

After a few reminiscences of his spirit of sacrifice in connection with the Garden-street Methodist Episcopal Church by its pastor, Rev. Mr. Cushman, the services were concluded with prayer, singing, and the benediction. The remains were then transferred to the vestibule for the last look of love.

The scene here will never be forgotten. The surging masses made movement almost impossible. The large vestry was filled with children, members of the Band of Hope, while the adjacent streets were packed with a weeping multitude. Women with faded shawls and garments, betokening poverty, crowded into the vestibule, their eyes streaming with tears, to take a final view of their best earthly friend. These were "his children"—the poor of whom he had spoken with such emotion in his farewell words. The funeral procession wended its way, through

the streets that had so often witnessed his passage on missions of mercy, to the cemetery overlooking the city. Tearfully he was laid away among his friends. A monument is about to be erected over his grave by the loving contributions of those with whom he lived, and for whom he labored so many years.

In the Lawrence cemetery lie the remains of the first soldier stricken down in the great Rebellion. The city has reared a fitting monument to his memory. May the name of Needham, the first martyr in the strife that exterminated slavery in the Republic, never be forgotten! But in that cemetery there lies one dearer to the heart of Lawrence than he; it is Wilson, the first city missionary. He might lie in an unmarked grave and have a monument still. His friends will never rear a shaft half as enduring as the love they bear him. His best monument is hidden in human hearts.

Memorial services were held in almost every church in Lawrence, and the life reviewed and its lessons impressed on the bereaved Churches. The blow fell heavily on his brethren in the ministry. The Boston Preachers' Meeting appointed a committee to draft resolutions

expressive of its feelings, and suggest such other action as might seem fitting.

The resolutions it adopted were as follows:—

*“Resolved, 1.* That we feel a profound sense of individual bereavement in the sudden removal of our beloved brother, Rev. George P. Wilson, from the activities of this life; a bereavement so personal as to lead us to inquire of God what special lessons he designs to teach us in permitting such a mysterious providence to befall our Conference, Church, and city.

*“Resolved, 2.* That we cannot too highly emphasize our estimate of the peculiar worth of our departed brother:—a man of pure speech, rare affability, and courteousness of manner, gladdening every family circle he entered with his genial conversation, and captivating, with a special grace and charm, the truthful heart of childhood: a genuine Christian gentleman; like his Master, a man of sorrows, choosing the Christ-like office of ministering to the lowly and sad, cheering them with a wonderful inspiration, and bearing on his tender sympathies the burden of their woes: a fearless champion of the weak and tempted, exposing with unsparing fidelity and royal courage the wickedness of the

corrupters of youth, and the criminal indifference of many who claim social respectability: a wise manager of interests intrusted to his supervision: a genial, fascinating speaker, both to old and young; rising at times to the higher excellences of fervent eloquence; and though without professional training, yet heartily welcomed in pulpits of all denominations: a model husband and father, making home all that Christianity signifies by the word: a warm, trustful, steadfast friend: a devoted disciple of the Lord Jesus:—in short, a man possessing a greater variety of excellent traits and qualities, and having them more harmoniously adjusted and developed, than is usual in our imperfect humanity.

“*Resolved*, 3. That we deplore the great loss our Church has sustained in this city, and we supplicate Almighty God that he will overrule this event, so that the society that pressed so heavily on his life may not be paralyzed by his unexpected departure.

“*Resolved*, 4. That we tender our deepest sympathies to the bereaved family, praying that divine strength may be imparted to the widow and fatherless, and that God will always be present to bless and comfort the blighted home.”

The committee also suggested that the facts of Mr. Wilson's life should be gathered up and published in a brief memoir for the benefit of the Christian public, and the writer of this biography was requested to perform the task. A memorial service was appointed, and Rev. W. R. Clark, D. D., selected to preach a discourse appropriate to the occasion.

On the following Sabbath afternoon a large and deeply affected audience gathered in the Broadway Church, South Boston, to share in these memorial services. The City Missionary Society was represented by nearly all of its official members, and the various pastors of the city and vicinity were present to participate. An eloquent and exceedingly appropriate discourse was delivered from Philippians i, 21, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

The following morning the Boston Preachers' Meeting gave its entire session to prayer and tributes of affection. Personal reminiscences were related by Rev. J. W. Barnes, for many years one of his most intimate friends, and Rev. W. H. Hatch, a companion in his California life. H. G. Herrick, Esq., High Sheriff of Essex County, for a long time a Sabbath-school teacher

with Mr. Wilson in the jail at Lawrence, gave a most eloquent and touching tribute to his memory, and his work among the prisoners. He referred to his wonderful power over the most hardened criminals, his Christ-like sympathy, and with tears that would flow, and with emotions he could scarcely control, pronounced him one of the most remarkable men he had ever known; remarkable for his personal unselfishness and devotion to the suffering and tempted, and especially for the wonderful influence with which he lifted up the most abandoned men, and inspired them with manly motives.

Said one of these unfortunate victims of vice, "Mr. Wilson never gave me money, but O, he cheered me so in my despair!"

It is with no common feelings of pleasure that we present the following letters from Christian men who have been associated with Mr. Wilson in his Lawrence labors. The first is from Mr. Herrick, of whom we have just spoken; the second from Rev. George Packard, D. D., pastor of the Grace Episcopal Church of Lawrence, and President of the City Mission from its formation to the present time:—

"LAWRENCE, *Jan.* 20, 1874.

"REV. D. C. KNOWLES:—

"MY DEAR SIR: I am very glad to know you purpose writing a memoir of our friend, the late George P. Wilson. I am sure you will write of him *con amore*, for you knew and loved the man, and sympathized with his work. You knew the qualities of mind and heart which made him the best-fitted man I ever saw for the work God called him to—a city missionary and a prison chaplain.

"Of him and his work as City Missionary you knew better than I, but in his work and office as Chaplain at the Jail and House of Correction I think I knew him better than you, and, in some respects, than any one else except his faithful and devoted wife, than whom no one entered more entirely and heartily into, or understood more thoroughly, all his work as a Christian man and minister.

"When I came in January, 1866, to the office which I have the honor to hold, I found Mr. Wilson Chaplain of the Essex County House of Correction, in this city. To this office he had been appointed several years before, and continued to hold it until his removal to Boston.

“My acquaintance with him began nearly three years before, but it was not until we were thrown together at the House of Correction that I began to *know* him. From that time I knew him more and more; and to know him was to esteem him, to honor him, to love him.

“For six years, with very few exceptions, I saw him every Sabbath, both at the preaching and Sunday-school services, and often during the week. I welcomed him, as we all did—officers, inmates, Sunday-school teachers, singers—as he came into the prison with his cheerful, happy face, a kind and loving word for all of us. I have seen cheerful and happy men, but never one so uniformly so, or one who threw such a light and glow about him, who so communicated his own cheerfulness to others. And here lay one great source of his usefulness.

“He never repelled any man, woman, or child—certainly never a child—by look, or act, or word of coldness, or severity, or even indifference; and yet he possessed a fine and accurate power of discernment and discrimination of character, and of character, too, such as he saw in a prison.

“Seldom was he deceived by the shams and pretenses of which one sees so much there. It



was a most remarkable quality in him, partly acquired but largely a natural endowment. He did not shut his heart against a man ; hold him off at arm's length, and coolly study and analyze him ; he rather took the man's hand, and walked along with him as he went.

"If I have had any success in prison government and management, it has been largely attributable to the personal influence of George P. Wilson during the period of his chaplaincy.

"The influence of his Sunday services—his preaching, his praying, his singing, his private conversations with the prisoners—ran through all the week. He impressed himself upon them. His simplicity and purity of character, his sincerity and personal interest in every one, were recognized and felt.

"I doubt if he ever got through his first prayer at the Sunday morning service without bringing tears from many eyes. Few could resist the tenderness with which he remembered and invoked blessings upon fathers and mothers at home, across the great waters, or among the hills and valleys of New Hampshire and Maine ; upon husbands and wives and little children crying for bread, or wandering about

the streets with none to care for them. How he would cry out, 'O God, save the poor homeless little children!'

"His addresses to prisoners were not elaborately prepared sermons, as if to be addressed to men and women educated in churches and Christian homes, and familiar with the ordinary phrases that express Christian experience, that are heard in conference and class-meetings, or in Christian conversation. They were not mere moral lectures or dry doctrinal arguments. They were simple, plain, practical Christian words, adapted to the condition of his hearers, touching their homes, their daily work, and daily lives. He tried to awaken desires for better homes, and better lives for themselves and their children; appealing to them as fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, or children, but never forgetting to tell them of Jesus as their best friend and Saviour, and of the love of the heavenly Father, though with no soft and apologizing words for sin, or patience with laziness and vagrancy. He had an apparently inexhaustible fund of anecdote and story, always appropriate, never coarse or low, furnishing illustration and enforcement of his subject at

once apt and forcible, as well as oftentimes inexpressibly touching.

“Although he had nothing to do with the discipline of the prison, he had well-considered and decided views on the subject of prison government. He was a believer in good, wholesome, thorough discipline, and in punishment when deserved *and because deserved*; nor did he believe that for the State to punish men for their crimes was an assumption of the Divine prerogative.

“Having as much charity and hope and faith as any man I ever saw, they never led him into wild and idle rhapsodies; and while they opened his heart to all sorrow and suffering, they did not close his eyes to the great depravity and wickedness, and weakened will, which place some men on the extremest verge of hope and faith—if not quite beyond it—and make their reformation, if not impossible, hardly to be expected.

“So much, my dear sir, in answer to your inquiries concerning Mr. Wilson’s connection with the prison here. It was a work of which the public knew but little, but in which he took the deepest interest. It was not only very

greatly useful in a general way, and as a constant aid in the government of the prison, but in very many instances saved men and women to sober, industrious, virtuous, and some, I doubt not, to Christian lives.

“Very truly yours,                      H. G. HERRICK.”

“LAWRENCE, *Jan.* 22, 1874.

“REV. D. C. KNOWLES:—

“MY DEAR SIR: I cheerfully comply with your request that I should tell you what I knew of the late Mr. George P. Wilson. I became acquainted with him upon his first coming to Lawrence; and as years passed on he was better known by me as a young man who, in the station of life in which God’s providence had placed him, was desirous of serving faithfully both his God and his fellow-man. Fidelity to trust was ever his prominent characteristic.

“As our town grew, and it was necessary to organize some provision to meet the demands for sympathy and relief that the poor made upon us, a Provident Association was formed, in whose operations he manifested a truly Christian, warm-hearted interest. It was soon ascer-

tained that instead of depending upon those who were engaged in business for examining into the applications for relief, and affording the aid in our power, we must, if possible, secure some one to whom all this could be intrusted. A committee was appointed who reported the organization under which we have now for fourteen years been acting, and the appointment of George P. Wilson as a City Missionary, who should look after the poor and dispose of the charities to be placed in his hands for their relief. The report was adopted, and Mr. Wilson was chosen to the responsible and laborious office of missionary to the poor.

“To the work assigned him he gave his body and mind and heart. Acting as chairman of the Board of Advice from its formation, I was necessarily made particularly acquainted with his plans of work and the manner of their execution. He so unreservedly opened his heart to me that I think I knew him well. From his consultations with me, I was more and more impressed with the singleness of his purpose, and the earnestness of his desire to do whatever the wants of the poor and the proper execution of his trust required of him.

“Although of decided religious views, there was a most conscientious avoidance of every thing which might seem to be sectarian, and he went about striving to do good, in the spirit of his Master, to the bodies and souls of men. In his visitations of the poor and sick ; in his sympathizing ministrations to the afflicted ; in his love and care for the children every-where manifested, but particularly in the sewing school which he established and in the temperance organization known as the Band of Hope ; in the great interest he ever took in our Sunday-schools, where he was always welcomed as a visitor and speaker ; in his labors in the evening school for adults which he formed and conducted for many years—in all he proved himself a faithful, untiring, devoted servant of his Lord and Master. The poor blessed him, and the children loved him, for to all he gave a loving smile and a cheering word.

“His annual reports to the Churches which appointed the Board of Advice were heard and read with great interest. In sentiment and in apt and forcible expression they indicated a mind of more than ordinary power, and a heart sanctified by the Spirit of God.

“The proposition for him to enter another, and in many respects a more important, sphere of labor, was frequently and seriously discussed by us. I felt that we could not have him leave his work here; and when the proposition was again and again renewed, and at last he made up his mind it was his duty to accept it, I was assured that he possessed qualities of mind and heart that eminently fitted him for the work to which he was called, and that, if his life were spared, he would prove himself there, as he had here, a faithful, energetic, and successful worker for the cause of Christ and the good of man.

“Very truly yours,

“GEORGE PACKARD.”

## CHAPTER XI.

## PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS.

MR. WILSON and I met for the first time in April, 1867. I had been transferred from a distant field of labor to the pastorate of the Haverhill-street Church, in Lawrence. The first Sabbath evening I spent in the city I attended a temperance meeting in the Lawrence-street Congregational Church, in company with H. G. Herrick, Esq. Mr. Wilson was one of the speakers. As he came before the audience Mr. Herrick informed me who he was, and, with a few words of eulogy, said he wished me to make his acquaintance at an early day.

His speech stirred my heart. It was so intense, so manifestly the expression of a genuine soul, who had nothing in view in standing where he did but the good of men, that I felt drawn to him with an irresistible longing to know him better. After the meeting was dismissed we met. Never shall I forget that look, that grasp of the hand. It strengthened me like the power



of prayer. His loving welcome to the stranger minister; his genial face; his expressed hope that we might stand side by side in holding up the crucified One; his outgushing, trustful manner, made me love him at once—a love that deepened and intensified as the years moved on.

April 5, 1868, Mr. Wilson and myself were ordained elders at the altar of my church by Bishop Ames. I recall with pleasure the occasion. A crowded audience was awaiting the commencement of the services. I was seated in the pew fronting the pulpit. Suddenly I was conscious of a companion, and, looking up, saw Mr. Wilson seeking a seat by my side. With his own inimitable manner, he said, "My brother, I want to sit by you to-day." It is a reminiscence that I sacredly cherish that we knelt side by side in being set apart for the work of the ministry by the formalities of consecration, and hand to hand on the sacred Word received authority to read and expound the blessed truths of the Bible.

I must ever regard my acquaintance with Mr. Wilson an epoch in my Christian experience. He has taught me some of the richest lessons

of life ; not so much by what he said, though his conversation was most useful, as by the spirit and power of his example. Our common ministry for the good of men threw us much together. Occasionally I preached for him in the jail, and he for me in my pulpit. Very frequently we met in public meetings on the Common and in the City Hall. Our social intercourse was usually brief but cheery. Business was too pressing to admit of waste of time, even for the purpose of friendship. Once I saw him in trying circumstances. For weeks he lay sick with a painful and protracted disease. My visits invariably impressed me with his wonderful patience, his sweet resignation, and inexhaustible wealth of hope. He seemed as contented to suffer as to work. His smile of recognition was as full of interest and brotherly tenderness as if he felt no pain flowing in torturing currents through his frame.

One occasion I shall ever remember. It was in the summer of 1871. I was passing a few days with my family at Hampton Beach. Mr. Wilson came down from Lawrence for a short respite from his official duties. We met upon the shore, and passed the time together talking

picking pebbles, and listening to God's great loom as it wove its snowy necklaces along the curving beach. He was then contemplating his Boston enterprise, and we went over the subject and considered it in its probable results for good or evil. In all that conversation one thought betrayed itself as the uppermost in his mind—the will of God. The thought of self was humbled in the presence of nobler ends.

After his removal to Boston we met weekly at the Preachers' Meeting. And here I chide myself for blindness of perception. In the presence of history, I feel somewhat condemned for having been so undiscerning as not to have seen what now is so apparent, that in silence he was slaying himself with toil. Oftentimes we dined together at the restaurant, and talked of each other's interests in a general way. I now recall an unwonted sadness, a weariness of manner entirely foreign to his usual vivacity, but it made little impression upon me at that time. I never suspected he was languishing with overwork. On several occasions he urged me to visit his home, but in every instance engagements and professional duties made it impossible. I now regret it deeply. Our conversation at

Hampton Beach had turned upon the nature of the Boston work, and I had expressed fears that he might find it too burdensome for his strength ; and possibly had I gone with him to his home he might have disclosed to me the load that was pressing him into the grave, and thus have given me the privilege of sounding the alarm. But regrets now are unavailing. The warrior is both unclothed and clothed upon. Our consolation now must come from the experimental testimony of the seer of Patmos : " And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth : Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors ; and their works do follow them."

In person Mr. Wilson was about five feet eight inches in height ; body finely proportioned ; head well-shaped, medium size, and covered with coal-black hair, straight and smooth ; full beard, thick and glossy ; small dark eyes, that sparkled and flashed with the varying emotions of his soul. His smile was peculiarly fascinating, and in his richest moods, a witchery of enjoyable feeling played over every feature of his face. His step was firm and quick,

indicating decision, purpose, and energy. No man of any discernment would have met him on the street and passed him without the impression that he had a life-work, and was vigorously seeking its accomplishment. His manners were especially pleasing and courteous, displaying not so much the conventional refinements of artistic society as those natural and ingenuous attitudes and movements that are the unstudied expressions of high integrity, lofty virtue, and native dignity. He was nature's gentleman, unspoiled by self-conscious art.

His conversation was practical, never speculative. He lived too much amid suffering and pressing want to devote much time to curious questions. If tempted to indulge in trivial distinctions, he was quickly called to duty by the sharp cry of distress, reminding him of his Master's injunctions to Peter: "What is that to thee? Follow thou me." The subjects that interested him most were the living questions of the present. On these he talked fluently, wisely, and instructively.

His speech was always pure. Slang was especially offensive to him. He never heard a

jest uttered, tinged with the slightest hue of vulgarity, without an involuntary expression of disgust and pain. His soul was not only free from that class of thoughts, but it was particularly sensitive to their presence. He mingled freely with the wicked, but was not one of them. He listened from necessity to the most corrupting language, but was not contaminated by it. The intercessory prayer of Jesus was answered in his experience ; he was kept from the evil of the world.

This purity of speech and thought made him a social favorite with the good. He had but little time to devote to the pastimes of society, but no one was more welcomed in Christian homes than he. His advent brought gladness to every circle he entered.

In reflecting upon the character of Mr. Wilson, I have been profoundly impressed with the *healthiness of his affections*. There is very much that is called *love* in modern society that bears upon it traces of disease—evidences of inflammation. It would be more properly termed sentimentalism than love. Sentimentalism is feeling without intelligent principle. A sentimentalist affects pathos, fine emotions, talks much

of charity without stating its necessary limitations, loves excitement for its own sake, values feeling more than right action, covets tears more than godliness. Such a type of emotional life is produced and cultivated by our modern fictitious literature, and nourished by so-called sensational preaching; and may be truthfully said to be one of the striking characteristics of latter-day Christianity. There is in this order of feeling a certain emotional deliciousness, not unlike the coveted sensations of the dram drinker.

This is not love, it is spiritual intoxication, produced by dramatic and pathetic pictures of the tortures of the cross, and the varied affecting experiences of human life. Such representations, moderately indulged, are not harmful—nay, on the contrary, they may be highly beneficial; but a literature or ministry chiefly noted for power in that direction may be pronounced by superficial thinkers extraordinarily successful, because of apparent results, but in reality the end of it is highly pernicious.

A feeling may be spurious as well as genuine. Its character is to be determined by its origin. Feeling may prompt a man to do an

act noble in itself without a particle of rewardable principle at its root. No man of discrimination would pronounce every soldier who fell on the battle-field in defense of the Republic during our late war a genuine patriot. He may have served the purposes of patriotism without the feeling. It cannot be a matter of dispute that many of them had no intelligent love of country inspiring their heroism. The feelings of an army are inflammable. The truly patriotic may inspire with excitement, not patriotism, masses who do noble deeds, caring all the while but little for the issues involved in the bloody strife.

Multitudes would fight as valiantly on one side as another ; they go with the current of impulse.

We fear there is somewhat of this element attaching itself to the Christian Church. Paul, no doubt, had his eye on this unhealthy type of feeling when he wrote the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians :—

“ Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, (love,) I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. . . . And though I bestow all my goods to feed



the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing."

Now it cannot be denied that under the powerful pressure of feeling the sentimentalist will give all his property, and call it benevolence ; or lay down his life, and pronounce it sacrifice. But it still remains that the act, however good in itself, does not prove the genuineness of the feeling.

Paul has been pleased in the same chapter to define love without the taint of disease, and I cannot but apply that masterly analysis to Mr. Wilson.

"Love suffereth long, and is kind ; love envieth not ; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil ; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth ; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things ; love never faileth."

Such were the characteristics of the love of the lamented dead. It was deep enough, and strong enough, and pure enough, to work out all these results in his life-ministry. He often

shed tears at the tale of his Master's sufferings, but they were not shed in vain. Every tear was born of deep principle, of implicit obedience to God's will, and was invariably followed by some heroic devotion to his Saviour. He often wept over the anguish of humanity, but the emotions did not end with weeping. He went forth to help, to bear burdens, and *to die*. This is healthy love ; all else is counterfeit, though it dissolve itself into tears.

The question may be silently asked by the reader, Had Mr. Wilson no faults, no glaring weaknesses? Possibly he had, but I never detected them. In common with us all, he was liable to mistakes of judgment ; but it is my candid conviction that I have never known a more symmetrical character. I have questioned myself closely upon this very point, without being able to discover a glaring defect in his mental or moral organization.. I have known greater men in some lines, but none better balanced. I have questioned others, who have been much more intimate with him, than myself, and the only weakness spoken of was a tendency to refer often in public addresses to his sainted mother. Most pardonable weak-

ness ! That mother's memory was to him second only to his Saviour's. We can well forgive, in these days of filial recklessness, an attachment so strong and a gratitude so deep, that it must find expression in tearful eulogies. May society be blessed with more such sons !

The task to which I have been called in God's providence is done. Deeply sensible of its incompleteness in execution, I can only trust that the influence of this precious life may never be lost. May it linger with us, as sanctified evidence that man can approximate very closely, through grace, to the spirit and temper of the Lord Jesus Christ !

**THE END.**



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